

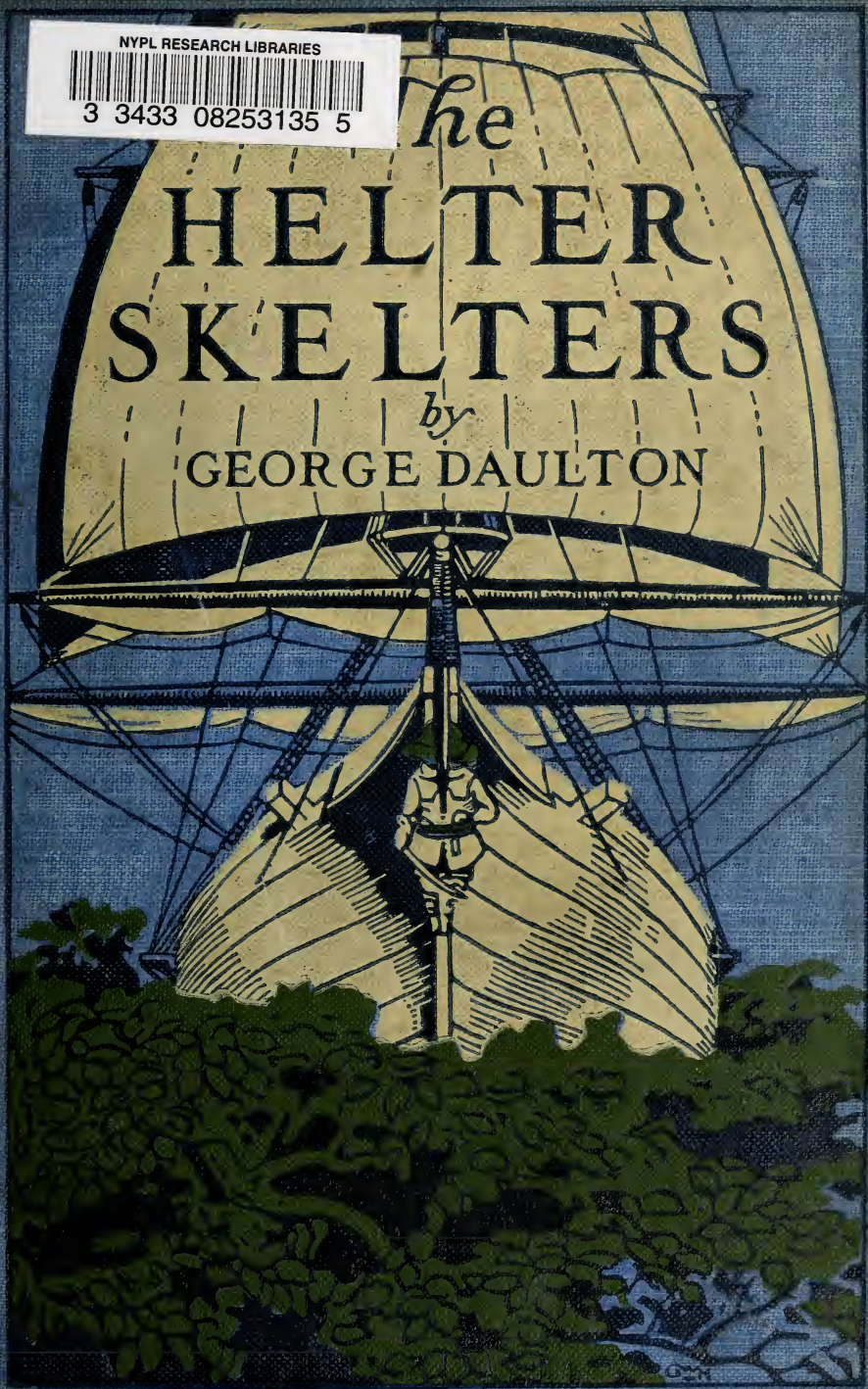
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The HELTER SKELTERS

by
GEORGE DAULTON



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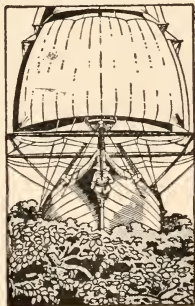
THE HELTER SKELTERS

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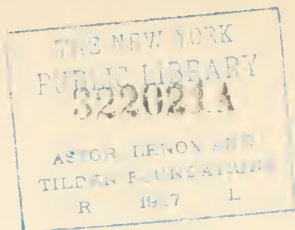
BY
GEORGE DAULTON

AUTHOR OF
"THE SULTAN'S DRAFT, AND OTHER STORIES," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED IN COLOUR BY M. L. KIRK



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September, 1909



To my "Father"
LEWIS ROBERT McCLELLAND

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“ ‘ PURE AS A LILY CLEANSED FROM ALL IN-
IQUITY, NOW AND FOREVER, AMEN ’ ” *Frontispiece*

“ THERE THEY CAME SIDE BY SIDE, CAPTAIN
PAGE AND SAILOR SANDY ” . . . *Facing page 6*

“ HIPPIY SAT IN THE *Dashaway*, ROWING WITH
THE BROOMSTICK OARS . . . *Facing page 92*

“ THERE WAS NO MISTAKING THE POLLOCK
FAMILY SILVER ” *Facing page 186*

The Helter Skelters

CHAPTER I

THE COMING OF THE CAPTAIN

PESTER, Helter's fox terrier, sat in the middle of the turnpike looking expectantly down the road with a gaze that did not waver, and though one ear drooped toward Hippy, the other was cocked straight up in the air to catch any sound that might float back from the tense young figures of four other children hiding along the way.

Hippy perched on the low gate-post with her crutch still tucked under her arm, for she wanted to be ready to hop on the instant's notice. As for Silva Luna Bassbinder, she was everywhere at once. She was too nervous to sit quietly, like Hippy, on the other gate-post, and too timid to hide with the rest of the "Scowling Scoots," so she just skipped back and forth and chewed

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her sunbonnet string, as she always did, when her soul was too full for utterance.

It was June, and vacation time—Vivian Helter was thankful for that, as she steadied herself in the slim maple she had chosen for a lookout—just to think, a week earlier and they would, every one of them, have been in school at this hour! It must be near ten—gracious me, wasn't Martin ever coming? Mamma and Mrs. Bassbinder would never have allowed them to stay at home. It made Vivian's blood run cold, just to think of it—in school upon this red-letter day!

Vivian was glad she had chosen the maple, though Mal, her brother, had warned her it was slight even for her light weight; but it grew on a little knoll where she could see farther than "Plug" Bassbinder in his oak, or Mal in his elm. Little Rog Helter, evidently thinking himself hidden, was nestling contentedly among the sumachs.

The sky was as blue as a gentian, with just wee scuds of fleecy white doing duty as clouds. The fields were snowed with daisies, gilded with buttercups, every fence

THE COMING OF THE CAPTAIN

corner was pink as dawn with wild roses swaying fragrance away on every little breeze that floated by, while the dusty country road ran by, sunny or shady, to lose itself at last in a gentle dip, just where it entered the shadowy coolness of the wood.

Such a beautiful world, and such a happy one, and oh, the captain was coming! In spite of herself Vivian bubbled into song.

"Hush yourself!" growled Mal from his neighbouring elm. "We can't hear the carriage coming."

There, too, watched the captain's boyhood home, Redroof, waiting for him, thought Vivian. Why, Aunt Chat and Hulda would have dusted its cupola if Mrs. Gordon had suggested it. How the white-washed tree trunks and rockeries in Bass-binder's yard glared in the sun! And there was her own home just across the way, shabby and weather-beaten, but oh, how dear! Denied song, Vivian swung in her perilous perch.

"Vi Helter, haven't you got any sense?" muttered Mal. "Do you want to fall and

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break yourself, just when the captain's coming?"

"Oh, Mal, I'm so happy—it seems I just can't keep still," whispered back Vivian. "Aren't you happy?"

"How can a fellow be happy with a crick in his neck, and the fidgets all over? I guess Martin has driven on to New York."

"*Oo-oo-oo!*" yodled little Rog, for it was he, after all, in his humble sumachs, who had caught the first glimpse of Martin as he drove out of the wood. Hippy hopped from the gate-post.

"*Sh-sh-sh!* Everybody to cover," warned Mal.

"Oh, me!" wailed Vivian.

"Oh-o-o!" sighed the others; for, alack and alas, there trotted Prince and Dapple with Martin driving, but not a soul else in the carriage.

"Didn't he come, Martin?" shrieked Vivian.

Martin only grinned as he rolled by, but when he saw Hippy, Hippy whom he adored, with tears in her eyes as she looked

THE COMING OF THE CAPTAIN

at him—some way no one ever could stand tears in Hippy Helter's eyes, and certainly not tender-hearted old Martin—he leaned far out over the wheel, mumbling in his cheerful bass, like a jolly old bumble bee:

“Set on your post, lovie. He's comin'. The captain just wanted to stretch his legs a bit. But him and his sailorman's a-com-
ing,” and Martin chuckled, as he patted the rough sailor's jacket that lay on the box beside him. Then Dapple and Prince, at a cheery “g' long,” trotted on toward Red-roof driveway. But the good news had flashed as if by wireless telegraph. Vivian once more swung on her bough, Hippy perched on the post, while Pester sat, one ear up and one ear down, in the middle of the road.

“*Oo-oo-oo!*” it was Vivian this time from her outlook. “*Oo-oo-oo!*”

“*Sh-sh-sh!*” hissed Mal, “everybody to cover!”

“Everybody to cover!” ran the order down the line. Hippy and Silva Luna scuttled back of their chosen rose-bush just

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inside the fence. Safely hidden, excitedly giggling, they nestled in the grass, holding Pester fast in spite of his growls.

The moment had arrived. There they came side by side, Captain Page and Sailor Sandy, out of the wood and up the dip.

"Oh, crickety, the captain's got his microscope!" whispered Vivian, with a breathless slip of the tongue to Mal.

"*Telescope*—don't be a dumbthump, Vi!" returned Mal with brotherly derision; "that's a regular spy-glass. He's the real stuff; hush up, though, or he will catch us."

The captain, broad-shouldered, grey-bearded, dressed in a heavy pea-jacket, and a blue cap with a gold cord, rolled slowly up the dusty road carrying a big brass spy-glass under his arm.

"Oh, a perfect captain!" Vivian thought, with an ecstatic sigh.

His companion, the sailor, was all a sailor-man should be; squat, red-faced, with a wreath of throat whiskers into which he cuddled his double chin as he swung down the



"THERE THEY CAME SIDE BY SIDE, CAPTAIN PAGE
AND SAILOR SANDY"

THE COMING OF THE CAPTAIN

road by the captain's side. His blue woollen shirt, opened at the front, was turned back, showing a weather-beaten breast, gorgeously tattooed, and his sleeves, rolled to his elbows, displayed each rough arm decorated with a hemisphere map of the world. He carried a foreign-looking covered basket, and a big brass bird-cage, in which swung a green and yellow parrot. At the very sight of him Mal swallowed, snickered and choked, as he snuggled down in his leafy hiding-place.

"There they are, Sandy, just as Martin said," chuckled the captain under his breath. "Look at that little chap in the bushes; do you suppose he thinks he's out of sight? Hitch up your trousers, Sandy, that is the way sailors do in story books, and wallop a bit, man, you're too steady on your legs."

"Hitchin' up your trousers, sir, when you're luggin' a blarsted cat in a basket and a parrot in a cage, ain't so easy to do trim as might be," muttered Sandy, back of his teeth. "I could have managed this bit of

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play actin', as ordered, better without the bird, sir."

"Pshaw, man, Polly adds colour to the scene. I might spell you a bit with her, only it would never do for the youngsters to see a captain doing that. See that bit of a girl in the maple? That must be Vivian; poor little Hippy doesn't climb trees."

"She's a brave one, sir, that slim young thing in the tree. She might as well be on the top gallant yard as standin' watch on that bit of a limb."

"Don't let them see you looking, Sandy."

"Ay, ay, sir. I'm only havin' 'em in the tail of me eye." By this time the captain and the sailor had passed the oak, the elm, the maple, and the sumachs, and the happy four fondly believed that not by the snapping of a twig had they betrayed their hiding-place. This had been to them one of those rare times when all they had imagined, or even dared to hope, had come true. Such a captain, such a sailorman! Plug felt he could almost sniff a salt ocean breeze.

THE COMING OF THE CAPTAIN

And now the two had reached the Helter fence, and now the open gate——

“Bow-wow! bow-wow!” Breaking away from the restraining arms Pester, leaping and retreating in a frenzy of motion, his eyes glaring, his stub tail fixed as a stump, rushed out upon the strangers. “Bow-wow!” he barked, springing straight at the covered basket that swung on Sandy’s arm.

“*Spit! spit! spit!*” came from inside the basket, now lunging violently.

“Belay that!” shouted Sandy, so wholly taken by surprise that he kicked angrily at Pester.

“Avast, matey, avast!” shrieked the parrot, flying to the top of his cage and clinging desperately to the wires.

“Why, Pester Helter! *Pester!* I’m perfectly ashamed of you!” wailed Hippy, forgetting all about Mal’s order to “keep under cover,” and the disgrace of a “Scoot” being caught. Struggling up on her crutch, she came hippety-hopping to the rescue.

“Pester! Pester Helter!”

“Bow-wow! bow-wow!”

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"Spit! spit!"

The captain was leaning helplessly against the fence convulsed with laughter, but at the first glimpse of that dear little face—so troubled, so ashamed—of that slender little figure swinging along on its crutch, his laughter died, and the captain's eyes grew tender as Captain Page's brown eyes could grow.

"Don't fret, little shipmate," he said, and stooping, he lifted Pester by the scruff of his neck, dropped him over the fence and swung the gate to. Then Captain Page and Hippy looked at each other, just for one steady instant—just two, and out went Hippy's slim little hand and the captain's strong brown fingers closed over it.

CHAPTER II

THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES

SOMETIMES, you know, beautiful things come suddenly into our lives, beautiful things we never dreamed would be ours. That was what had happened to the Helters.

Now the Helter children had heard their mother, ever since they could remember, tell about the dear old farm where she had been born and reared. Just a poor little shrunken bit of a farm these days, though once it had been a broad estate in the Tillatoba Valley. That was in great-great-Grandfather Pollock's day, when Indians were common and deer came to the spring to drink. At that time, too, there had been an uprising among the Indians. The little Helters loved that story—how great-great-grandfather being away from home, great-great-grandmother, who was both wise and

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brave, had dug a deep hole somewhere on the farm, and had buried great-great-grandfather's bags of money, and all the family silver, consisting of "a dozen spoons, a dozen forks, three candlesticks, and a soup ladle." How many times the little Helters had made their mother go over that beloved list! But that was just the beginning of the story; the rest was that poor great-great-grandmother, worn out with exposure and fatigue during the dreadful days that followed, died before great-great-grandfather came home and no one ever knew, so well had she kept her secret, where on all that big farm she had buried the treasure.

And though it was said great-great-grandfather had dug, and dug, and dug, and every descendant since had dug, and dug, no one had ever had a peep at those bags of money nor the family silver. Indeed, there were those who said they doubted if any treasure had ever been buried; why, some even doubted if there had ever been any family silver—but, you may be sure, the Helter children did not belong to these

THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES

doubting Thomases. They just doted on every single spoon and every candlestick, not for their worth, but because they were *buried*. Buried treasure! What could be more entrancing? But this was only one attraction of the old farm—there was the big mossy rock where mother had loved to play, and the spring, and Pitter-Patter Brook, and the beautiful old place next called Redroof. It seemed like fairyland, so you can imagine, perhaps, their wild joy one day when an entirely unexpected letter came to their mother, saying that Uncle Daniel Pollock—who had never spoken to his favourite niece since the day she married the Rev. Charles Helter, not even when she had been left a widow with four children—had died, and left the old Pollock farm and all its appurtenances to her and her heirs forever.

It was Hippy, spinning about on her crutch like a little teetotum, who had brought them all back to life and reality.

“Don’t stop me, please, mamma,” she cried, as her mother held out her arms to

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her. "I'm so happy it seems as though I'd burst if I don't spin. Just to think of living in the really country, on the treasure farm. It seems as if the Lord is most *too* good to us!"

But all this happened two years before, and to the Helter children already the life before they came to Tillatoba Valley seemed almost like a dream. They were very, very happy in the weather-beaten old farm-house—not that living in the country was the cause of all their happiness, for it seemed as if every one of the four had been born under a joyful star—Vivian, Malcolm, Charlotte and Roger. Such merry, rollicking babies as they were from the very beginning! Charlotte, or Lottie, as they called Hippy in her baby days, because of a cruel injury to her knee had been unable to walk the most of her life, but the very first day she tried her little crutch she hopped back and forth across the kitchen floor in a very ecstasy of glee, crying:

"Hippety-hop, hippety-hop, that's the way *I* go! Hippety—that's *my* name; it's

THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES

ever so much better than Lottie.” And so Hippety it had been, until it slid into Hippy. No one seemed to feel the pathos of it—but, indeed, as you looked into Hippy Helter’s eyes you were apt to forget the pathos. Eyes so blue, with long black lashes, and in those eyes there was—well, was it joy, or love, or courage, or all three blended? And there was a blessed spice of mischief in them, too, a lot of it, for which you were thankful, as you listened to the clickety-clack of her little crutch. Hippy was twelve years old and a slim slip of a child, with a pale little face, a sonsy chin, a saucy nose, a lovable mouth, and an adorable smile. She had soft brown hair, worn in a thick braid that curled at the end. That’s a good portrait of Hippy Helter, if you don’t forget the dimple and the tenderness, or was it fun, that sparkled and sparkled? And yet, no one ever said, “The beauty!” as they were beginning to say now when they saw Vivian.

If the coming to Tillatoba Valley was a joy to the Helters what should you suppose their coming was to the Bassbinder children,

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who lived just across the road in the whitest house with the greenest shutters that was ever seen beneath the sun? Every tree and bush in their yard was trimmed within an inch of its life—every tree trunk, and every stone that edged the paths and flower beds, was whitewashed within an inch of its life. The windows glistened, the curtains were so stiff, and white—but then you should have seen Mrs. Bassbinder herself, her green and white gingham gown and white apron were just as white, and green, and stiff as the house, the shutters and the curtains, and her spectacles, through which she was always looking for dirt, glistened just like the windows.

Silva Luna had been washed, and, one might almost say, ironed so much, you wondered how the poor child had managed not to be quite washed out. Indeed, Vivian thought sometimes she had faded a little, Silva was so colourless and silent. But Hippy loved her, Hippy understood Silva Luna, and when Silva just chewed her sun-bonnet string and looked, and couldn't say a

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single word, “she *felt* so much she just couldn’t”—at least that’s what Hippy declared. So Hippy loved Silva, and Silva, adoring Hippy from the first moment of acquaintance, followed the clickety-clacking little crutch from morning until night.

As for Leonard Vincent Bassbinder, he was made of sterner stuff than his sister, and even constant washing, and being called by his full name, had failed to fade the fire and the fun in him, and after the Helters came—the “Helter Skelters,” as Mrs. Bassbinder named them before the first week of their acquaintance was up—why, the boy just broke right through the crust of awful cleanliness, and now not a soul, but his mother and his father, and the teacher of the little red schoolhouse, ever called him anything but “Plug.” He thrashed the one boy who persisted in the old way, and he cherished the many freckles that now dotted his nose—his mother had insisted upon his wearing a broad-brimmed hat to save his complexion—with the same satisfaction he felt for the wart on his thumb.

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“My oh!” sighed Mrs. Bassbinder to her husband. “Those children are as changed since the Helter-Skelters came as if they had been dipped into a dye-pot. What is the reason, do you suppose, that they’d both rather a hundred times over be in that topsy-turvy house than in their own tidy home? Mrs. Helter takes about the same interest in the housekeeping that Vivian does. She just plays with the children and embroiders and reads by the hour with the house looking like tunket. She don’t care, so Minnie gives them enough to eat and keeps them half way tidy. My, my, who would ever believe their Minnie and my Winnie are twins? If ever hired help was different, it’s those two girls, and here I can’t tell, by sight, one from the other, after Winnie has been with me for ten years.”

“You can easy enough tell by their temper,” said Mr. Bassbinder from behind his paper. “Winnie is as cross as a hornet.”

“Well, don’t the Helter Skelters run right over Minnie?” asked his wife, stooping to pick up an imaginary ravelling. “I

THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES

believe she would jump off the roof, if Hippy asked her to. Those children need a father's strong hand, their mother . . ."

"Why, Sarah," said Mr. Bassbinder, looking over at his wife in surprise. "I supposed you thought the sun rose and set in Mrs. Helter."

"So I—do," hesitated his wife; "she's the best little woman in this world; it is just her housekeeping gets me. Why, on birthdays, and Christmas, and Fourth of July, and in doings, and fixing the table, and putting candles on a cake, and hanging leaves around, and telling the children stories, she is just in her element, and no mother could do more; but just everyday mothering, and housekeeping. . . . Well, I am glad Mrs. Gordon has taken them all in hand, for they certainly need it."

CHAPTER III

NEXT DOOR

NEXT door to the Helter's lay Redroof, the old Page estate. Redroof itself was a beautiful old stone house, with a red tile roof, covered with ivy and set among a stately grove of trees. Anything more unlike the Helter's shabby old farm-house, or the prim, stark cottage of the Bassbinders, could not well be imagined. Redroof had its conservatory, its winding drives, its fountain, its lodge and coachman's house, and a great stone barn, where Dapple and Prince lived, and Bomba and Iris, the pretty Jersey cows. And everything at Redroof was so perfectly kept—such velvety lawns, and gravelled paths, and blooming flower beds!—yet there was only old Martin, who loved every stick and stone on the old place, to attend to it all. Aunt Chat and Hulda were

NEXT DOOR

the cook and housemaid, and to enjoy all the grandeur of Redroof there was only its little mistress, Mrs. Gordon, who had been Katharine Page, and who owned the estate with Captain John Page, of the steamship *Lucia*.

Mrs. Gordon was a childless widow, and perhaps she was no longer young, but if so, no one had ever discovered it, for though her hair was white and her face a wee bit lined, her cheeks were softly pink, her grey eyes bright, and her voice had a childish ripple in it. She had delicate little white hands that were forever fluttering to put back the curly white lock that would dance out of place. Perhaps she seemed more beautiful than she really was because of that fairy gift called charm. If you complained of the rain to Mrs. Gordon she would cheerfully tell you it would be sure to be shining to-morrow. If crops were bad, or the price of barrels was too low—Mr. Bassbinder was a cooper—or you had a cold, or the chimney smoked, she knew, and merrily said, it would all come right; and as you listened to her

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rippling voice and watched her merry smile you knew, too, that it would. Add to this that she loved children with an understanding love, and that Redroof was packed from cellar to garret with all sorts of interesting things brought home by three generations of seafaring men, and that she loved to show you and tell you about them, and that she talked always and always of her marvellous brother, the captain, who was coming back to Redroof some day—and do you wonder that the Helters and the Bassbinders looked upon Aunt Kitty—for so they were favoured in calling her—as a chum, a fairy godmother and guardian angel, all in one, and worshipped accordingly?

Before the Helters came Mrs. Gordon had been rather lonely, in spite of the fact that the town was only a mile away. She had tried to make friends with Silva Luna and Leonard Vincent Bassbinder and had found them too shy in those days. But when the Helter children—Vivian, Mal, Hippy, and Rog—came rollicking next

NEXT DOOR

door, Mrs. Gordon just opened her arms and heart, and they, having chummed with their mother all their days, understood what was offered them, and rushed right in to fill her empty heart very full.

But this was not all the happiness Uncle Daniel Pollock caused by leaving the old farm to his niece—it reached clear over the seas to Captain Page, for, as he sailed, and sailed, the thought of his sister Kitty, so alone in the old house, had always troubled him; but after the Helter Skelters came pell-melling about Redroof he found her merry letters in every port.

Such chronicles of the gay doings of the children! “The most imaginative youngsters, Jack, I’ve ever known,” she wrote; “they seem to live in a land of fancy, and yet they are such dear human things, naughty sometimes, but truthful and straightforward.” There were tales of pretty Vivian, the veriest tomboy that ever climbed a tree; of capering Rog, a nine-year-old mischief; of little Silvia, and Mal, and Plug, “those two dear boys, who have gone

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sea-crazy, since I gave Mal 'Treasure Island.' I really believe he sleeps with it under his pillow," she went on, "and now the whole band has become inoculated with the virus of the sea, and we live and have our being in things shippy. When I found they loved it so much I flew up to your room for the old sea-stories—I can see you now under the big chestnut with your chin in your palms; how I hated those old green books when you wouldn't come to play!—and you know, Jack, I found the shelves empty. Then I remembered the day your Edgar begged to take 'daddy's' old books home with him. He was about twelve then, and to think of him since, a man grown, married in England, and dead now these many years, leaving over there a little son of his own. Oh, Jack, don't think I ever forget your sorrows. You should have Mead—it's all a cruel wrong. You are his grandfather as well as Sir Austin Frye. I can't feel, dear, you are doing just the right thing by the boy, for I know what he is missing in not knowing his American grandfather,

NEXT DOOR

Captain John Page—but forgive me, I have said too much. . . .

“Well, as sea-books must be gotten, and at once, I ordered them higgledy-piggledy, trusting to luck, and I am afraid some pirate lore must have been hidden under the pretty covers, for these dimpled, rosy, clear-eyed youngsters have named themselves the ‘Scowling Scoots,’ and come, all eager and excited, to ask me questions like these: ‘Please, what does *hard a-lee* mean, Aunt Kitty?’ and ‘how do you *set the boom tackle* and *draw the jib*?’ and ‘why, *when in the latitude 27° 20’ N., long. 177° W., the wind chopping suddenly into the west, did the captain, eager for easting, guy the booms out wing and wing*?’ Do come home, Jack, and explain.” Here it was that Captain Page threw back his grey head and roared with laughter. He, who had been on a steamship these thirty years, wouldn’t attempt to sail a schooner, now, let alone a brig, and poor little Kitty, who didn’t know the mizzenmast from the jib boom, to have it laid aboard like this—well,

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she *was* "up against it." How he would love to see her and old Redroof, and these jolly boys and girls, perhaps they would ease the ache for Mead—why, let's see, Mead would be near fifteen; perhaps he, too, had the sea-madness, for it was in his blood. But he wouldn't allow himself to think of Mead, and again he picked up the letter.

"But, after all, I may as well admit it, Hippy is my favourite," wrote Mrs. Gordon. "Sometimes I wonder why it is the child pulls so at my heart strings; it's not pity for her, for she's the merriest little soul under the sun. I think it's her gallant little spirit that nothing daunts. I've been making the girls some pretty little frocks and I chose them Sunday hats—that's one advantage with this dear child-like, and yet sensible mother of theirs—she don't mind, so we are all happy. As I snipped and tucked the little duds that old sea song of yours just sang itself out of my heart, and Aunt Chat said: 'Now, Miss Kitty, I ain't heard dat fo' many a day. Dem blessed no 'count chillen is 'doin' yo' a worl' of good. Jus'

NEXT DOOR

wish Captin^r Jack would come home.' Oh, so do I! *Do* come Jack, I want you so!"

"Sandy," said Captain Page, while he thoughtfully watched him mend the tarpaulin of the longboat at the dock at Halifax three days before the *Lucia* set sail. "Sandy, when the *Lucia* gets into New York, I'm going to resign my berth, I'm a bit tired, I believe."

"Ay, ay, sir," returned Sandy, touching his forelock. "And which way will we set sail then, sir?"

"*'We sail?'*" inquired the captain, twinkling with pretended surprise; but something the captain read in Sandy Slack's steady eyes made him break into a smile, and then he added in quite another tone, "well, I think, Sandy, we will go and stay with my sister, in the house where I was born."

"Ay, ay, sir," said Sandy.

Before they had sailed from Halifax Sandy knew all about the Helter and Bassbinder children that the captain could tell, and had grown to think of them with the

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same affectionate amusement, for the truth was, Captain John Page and Sandy had kept the child-heart through all their life, and that is what made them such great friends, though master and man, this, and the fact they had sailed together twenty years, and that Sandy had twice saved the captain's life. That Captain Page would leave him behind never entered Sandy's mind, and you may be sure the captain didn't have the heart to propose it.

It was Sandy who suggested taking the spy-glass, feeling sure the captain's elegant binoculars would seem tame to boys steeped in pirate lore. As he started out to find the glass in some old South Street junk shop in New York, the captain called after him to see if he couldn't find the proper thing in parrots. That, too, was easy enough. A ship's cook from South America who had just gotten in was glad to part with a galley pet for what Sandy offered him. "Mother," the *Lucia's* cat, Sandy had brought off in a basket. She had been born at sea, and, until she curled her tail around her fore paws,

NEXT DOOR

when she sat herself down on Redroof's front lawn, had never set foot on dry land. Not that location made any difference to "Mother"; she just sat and blinked with her great yellow eyes at a robin hopping in the grass, as she had blinked at the flying fish. It was all one to "Mother." And all one to the "Admiral," the parrot, who, being a good sailor, too, swung in his brass hoop, scratching his head and croaking deep in his throat: "Heave ho, mates, heave away," and then answered himself in a whisper, "Ay, ay, sir, ay, ay!"

CHAPTER IV

TREASURE CAVE

SILVA LUNA—A—A! Oh, Silva!” Hippy called from the front gate. It was the morning after the captain’s coming and the rest of the Scowling Scoots had announced their intention of “hovering”—by which they meant reconnoitring—about Redroof all day, in hope of a glimpse of the captain, or perhaps a word with Sandy, the sailorman. “Silva Luna—a—a!”

“I’m coming, I’m coming,” came faintly back the answer.

“Silva—a—a!”

Just then Bassbinder’s screen door flew open and Silva appeared, so stiffly starched she rattled as she walked, and with her yellow hair “slicked” back so tightly into two neat pig-tails it looked as though it would be hard for her to shut her eyes. Under

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one arm she carried Cordelia, also stiffly starched, and under the other arm was Cordelia's trunk and a wicker work-basket.

"Oh, Silva," called Hippy across the road, "please don't bring Cordelia. Minnie says twelve is awfully old to play with dolls. I'm going to hide Jessica up in the attic." But Silva, hugging Cordelia closer, came silently on.

"Please, Silva," begged Hippy, "I don't want to play dolls to-day. I have got a scrumptious plan, and we'll have to hurry."

"So have I a scrumptious plan," returned Silva, jerking Cordelia to a higher place under her arm, as Pester appeared trotting down the path—dangling kid feet and hands had an awful fascination for Pester and it was always well to be on the safe side.

"Oh, goody, Silva!" cried Hippy. "Has your plan anything to do with ships?"

Silva Luna shook her head so emphatically the tight little pig-tails wagged behind like a pendulum.

"I'm awfully glad of that," went on Hippy, hopping along gleefully. "I just

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love Captain Page and Mr. Sandy, and I always cared the most for the ocean of any of our family, after Aunt Kitty gave me the green sea-shell, and some day, mamma says, I may go and see it; but I don't like very well the things Mal, and Plug, and Vi, and Rog love so. It isn't waves and shells, nor sails, nor mermaids; its pirates, and wrecks, and cannibals . . . Why, Silva, I'll tell you something if you never breathe it, cross-your-heart-and-hope-to-die. Our Vi found a picture, and she wanted to frame it, and hang it up in her room, and mamma wouldn't let her, and said she was perfectly surprised, for what do you suppose it was, Silva? Why, a picture of a big pot with feet sticking out, and cannibals dancing around, and Mal said he thought it was dandy. Ugh, it makes me shiver yet! I wasn't going to hover, for I just know Aunt Kitty will want the captain all to herself a little bit. I am sure you and I would, if it were Mal and Plug who had been off for years. Any way, I am sort of tired of scouting, and ships, and playing dolls. My

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plan is about buried treasure—is your’s Silva?”

“Well, it has something to do with Treasure Cave,” admitted Silva reluctantly; when your ideas are few they are precious.

“Oh, I just believe our plans are exactly the same,” cried Hippy, “only I don’t see how you knew it was mamma’s birthday.”

“I didn’t,” said Silva.

They had gone down the garden path, through the gate, and were now crossing the meadow to Treasure Cave. It was such an entrancing meadow it really ought to be spelled with capitals. You see, it had always been considered too stony for cultivation, and so great trees had been allowed to group themselves in it, here and there, and lurking in their shadow everywhere were out-cropping rocks that made the most fascinating beasts, if you were playing jungle—every rock had its name—or ice cakes, if it were Eliza and the bloodhounds you were playing, or desert islands, if it were voyages and adventures. Add to this, deep grass, daisies and buttercups, whiffs of wild

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roses and pennyroyal; song sparrows, meadow larks, and thistle birds, a brook and a spring—and now, isn't your heart just aching to be there? But oh, the best is left for the last!

Right in the middle of the meadow, at the head of a deep ravine, was the big mossy rock their mother had so often told them of. It was really half as big as the barn, a beautiful, mottled, mossy rock, with wild roses nestling at its foot, and ferns, baby oaks, and daisies growing out of its cracks and crannies, while on the cool north side a deep spring bubbled, a spring that overflowed and splashed away in a wee cascade down the ravine to join Pitter-Patter Brook on its way to the river.

When the Helter children came to Tillatoba Valley they at once decided it was under this rock that great-great-Grandmother Pollock had hidden the money bags and the family silver, and all their mother's arguments that it was too much in the open, and that the ground was too hard for poor grandmother to have dug there, or that, anyway,

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she never could have hidden it under that great rock, failed to convince them. At it they went with picks and shovels. Mal and Plug, after much discussion, wise squints at the sun, and laying off the land with great strides, decided the treasure was buried on the east side. Should the truth be told, those children would have considered themselves dreadfully abused had they been required to toil at any real task as they did in digging for that legendary treasure. Even Silva Luna went at it with a big iron spoon, Hippy hunting soft spots for her with the end of her crutch; but Mal, and Plug, and Vivian, aided by little Rog to the full limit of his strength, dug and dug for days, until one morning it broke upon them, all in a moment, that, if they hadn't found the treasure, they had dug the most fascinating cave under the jutting rock, for, buried deep in the earth as it was, the rock slanted from east and south, resting on its base at the northwest corner. With the discovery of the cave all reason of their hard labour was forgotten. It was the "dandiest cave

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going," Mal said, so they immediately named it "Treasure Cave," called themselves the "Scowling Scoots," and took up their habitation there.

With chisel and mallet the boys chipped all sorts of jolly little niches and cubby holes in the shelving rock that reached down on all sides and roofed away out over their heads. At the very back of the cave they put up little bark-covered doors that enclosed the whole end and was shut with a padlock, the key of which was kept hidden in a cranny over the spring, where only a "Scowling Scoot" could find it. Back of these doors was a series of deep holes, a hole for each member, covered with a flat stone, and here were kept one's dearest treasures, and, as Vi put it, nobody but a "villy-viley sneak" would ever look under a "Scowling Scoot's" stone—why, nobody ever dreamed of looking under anyone's stone but his own—though just what a "villy-viley sneak" was, nobody quite knew.

Everyone loved the cave, but, after all, it was Hippy and Silva who took the most

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pleasure in it and, indeed, deep as was the path across the meadow made by swift young feet, the peck, peck, peck of Hippy's crutch had made a deeper furrow by its side.

"Now, Silva, what is your plan?" Hippy inquired, when they had stopped to get the key at the spring and a drink from the tin cup that was always kept on the ledge. Busy with their talk neither Hippy nor Silva saw a man who was slinking now by "tiger rock" and now by "elephant boulder."

"You tell your plan first, Hippy," urged Silva.

"Well . . . well, you see," hesitated Hippy, "it's mamma's birthday, and I gave every cent out of my clay pig for the Hindoo widow at Sunday School. I just most wish I hadn't, for Mal, and Vi, and Rog only gave ten cents apiece and you ought to remember your own mother." The thought of a ten-year-old widow appealed to Hippy's imagination as much as to her heart; in fancy she saw her in black with a drooping veil. "The rest never said a word

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to me about the present for mamma, for they knew I hadn't a single cent and so couldn't help. I just felt awfully bad till I thought of my plan—it's to dig for the treasure some more. Just think, if I should find it, what a lovely present two bags of money, a dozen silver forks, a dozen spoons, three candlesticks and a soup ladle would be!"

The man had passed the "elephant" and the "hippopotamus," and then, stooping low, scudded toward "Treasure Rock," and swinging himself up softly and lightly as a cat, sat there blinking in the sun—and, bless us, if it wasn't Sandy, the sailorman, cuddling his double chin in his wreath of snowy whiskers, while he smiled to himself.

"Yes," agreed Silva, entirely unaware of the merry eyes bent upon her from above—she could talk fast enough when alone with Hippy—"Yes, they would just be lovely if we found them, but oh, just think how we dug and dug. And if we begin again we will have to tear out the cupboards and spoil everything, and the rest will be so mad at us. Besides, we mightn't find the treasure,

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after all. Oh, Hippy, that isn't a bit like my scrumptious plan." They had entered the cave now and had seated themselves on the rock settee to talk it out. "Now my plan is to go up into the woods and get heaps and heaps of that lovely flat moss that grows on logs—you can peel it off, you know, like a big rug—and we would get so much we could make a whole moss carpet for Treasure Cave. We would get two little mossy logs for sofas—this rock is as hard as a stone—and they'd just match the carpet and we'd get some stumpy things, all mossy and licheny, for chairs. . . ."

"Oh, oh, goody!" shrieked Hippy, afire with a splendid idea, "why, Silva Luna, how perfectly splendid that will be for mamma's birthday, and we can have a—a surprise party; I am sure Minnie would make us a cake, and we could have tea down here and decorate the cave with daisies, and buttercups, and wild roses. Oh, goody, goody! And *I* know, Silva, Mal read it to us, how they give the freedom of a city to folks, and hand them a key on a velvet cushion, or

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something, and we could get one of those pale-green bumps of moss—you know, that cushiony kind—and give mamma the cupboard key on it, and Mal could make a speech and give her the freedom of the cave, and she could open the door and look under our stones.”

“Why, Hippy *Helter!*” gasped Silva Luna, horrified. “Do you want your own precious mother to be a villy-viley sneak?”

“Oh, she wouldn’t be, if we gave her leave, Silva.”

“Yes, she would,” declared Silva solemnly, “forever and ever, and you couldn’t wash it off, and, besides, I don’t believe she’d care for it. But, oh, Hippy, if we could only get the moss and have the party—maybe I could get Winnie to make some heart-cookies—she isn’t so cross to-day.”

“It’s an awfully high hill,” admitted Hippy, “and I suppose my crutch would hinder, but we could do it, Silva, I’m sure we could do it, if we tried ever so hard.” She gave up the freedom of the cave idea, for she knew that under her stone there were

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only three Sunday School cards, a peacock feather, and the green shell, and she doubted, as well, the interest of what was under the others. "I suppose we could get the rest to help, but I'd like to have this just our present."

"Maybe we could take Deacon," suggested Silva.

"Oh, you know your mother wouldn't let us, besides you know you are just as afraid of Deacon as can be." Deacon was Silva's Indian pony, given her by the lady who had named her, a wiry little pony that stood in the barn eating his naughty head off, because Mrs. Bassbinder felt that ponies were too fine for everyday use, like one's Sunday hat or parasol. "No, that won't do, Silva; but it almost breaks my heart to give it up."

"Matey ahoy! Don't give up the ship!" roared a cheery voice right over their heads.

"Oh! oh!" shrieked Silva Luna, "what's that?"

"It . . . it must be the sailorman," gasped Hippy.

"All clear below, little shipmates!"

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roared the voice again. "Stand from under! Steady, steady."

Sliding, and scrabbling, as he said this, making pretended lunges fit to break his neck, Sandy stumbled and tumbled down Treasure Rock—Sandy, the sailor, who could stand on his head on the main truck and swing about a ship's rigging like a monkey in a tree. But Hippy and Silva in a state of ecstatic fright never dreamed it was all fun that made Sandy despairingly clutch at every baby oak and springing daisy stalk, and that he wasn't really hanging on by his eyelids. Indeed, their hearts were so delightfully fluttered they quite forgot to be timid, when, red-faced and breathless, he stood at the entrance of the cave.

"And now, I have hopes you'll forgive a sailorman for overhearin'," wheedled Sandy, hat in hand, "but bein', as it were, marooned on a desert isle in this deep sea of a medder, a man is 'most glad to hear voices, 'specially if it's little ladies' voices plannin' for their ma's birthday, and a wish-in' as how they could do somethin' they

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can't, an'," he went on, giving them a beautiful sailor's bow, with a prolonged scrape of his foot, "if you little ladies would give an idle sailorman somethin' to do, he'd be much obliged as ever was. Hill climbin' is hard for a little girl with a—a bad foot, but it's just plum-duff to a sailor with nothing to do."

"Oh, oh!" cried Hippy, all at once understanding what Sandy was driving at. "Oh, kind Mr. Sailorman, would you help us? Oh, would you get the moss and things?"

"Just wouldn't I, though," replied Sandy, cuddling his chin in his whiskers and smiling, though his kind blue eyes were a bit misty, for Hippy was such a dear child when she was excited, her pale cheeks flushed and her eyes shining like stars.

"And it wouldn't be a bother, and Captain Page wouldn't care?" inquired Hippy eagerly, "and oh, if we just could have heaps of moss!"

"And two logs for settees and little stumps for chairs," Sandy counted on his

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stubby old fingers. "I noted 'em all layin' aloft on the rock."

"Oh, mother will be so happy! We never did anything like this before—and it won't be a bother?"

"Not a mite," grinned Sandy. "I haven't been in a civilised woods, as you might put it, since I was a little codger, but I loved it then. So I'll set sail, little ladies, and be back, 'fore you miss me. Is that the woods?"

"Yes, right on the top of the hill; Silva and I will be making wreaths and bouquets. Oh, I think you are the kindest man ever was—thank you so much. Just lots and lots of moss, please, Mr. Sailor."

"Ay, ay, little captain," and Sandy, with a last cuddle of his chin, rolled away across the meadow.

CHAPTER V

SILVA LUNA'S SCRUMPTIOUS PLAN

“‘For I tell you, Mr. Lincoln,
That a little Bob—’o—Lincoln,
Can never sing a song in a cage—oh no,’”

sang Hippy gaily, as she wove the daisies with buttercups. The sun was blazing down in the meadow and it was very still in the cave except for Hippy’s singing, for Silva had gone to the spring to fill the old nick-nosed blue jug.

“‘Can never sing a song . . .’”

Around the corner of the rock came Silva, still clinging to the empty jug as she dashed past astonished Hippy to the darkest, safest corner in the cave.

“Goodness, gracious!” cried Hippy, staring at Silva. “Oh, it’s somebody coming, is it? It can’t be the Scoots, nor Aunty

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Kitty, because you wouldn't be afraid of them, and it isn't the sailorman, for I could see him as well as you—oh, Silva Luna Bassbinder, you don't mean it's the captain?"

"Yes," breathed Silva from a dry throat, trying to retire farther into the rock. "It's the captain, and—and he is right by the tiger."

"Oh—oh," and then Hippy giggled. "Isn't it funny, Silva? All the rest of the Scoots have been hovering, and here we didn't, and we've seen the sailorman, and now we'll see the captain."

"I—I wish I'd hovered," whispered Silva.

"Why, Silva—aren't the Scoots missing it all?"

"That is the reason I wished it."

"Oh, Silva, don't be so scared. Why, the sailor was just lovely, and, of course, the captain will be. Please, don't be such a goose," begged Hippy, under her breath, for already there was the sound of approaching footsteps.

"Well, well!" said Captain Page, doff-

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ing his cap with a wide sweep, "so here are the little friends. Are you at home to calls? and what is it, a party—a picnic? Why, the cave is in gala dress."

Hippy's heart did beat a wee bit faster, Silva's ridiculous shyness was catching, but when she looked up into the captain's pleasant face—why, she laughed right out, and said the first thing that popped into her head:

"Did the Scowling Scoots . . ." but at the sound of her own voice she blushed rosy red, and hopping up on her crutch she went on, with a pretty little gracious manner borrowed from Aunt Kitty:

"Oh, Captain Page, we're ever so glad to see you, won't you come in and take a ——" she was going to say chair, but, when she looked at the rock, the giggle broke out again, and she finished gaily, "take a rock," at which they all laughed, even Silva giving her choked gurgle.

"I found something out there by that big rock," said the captain when he was seated, "that interested me a great deal. It seemed

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like . . . like two bed rails fastened together in a point with seats between."

"Oh, yes, that's the *Dashaway*."

"Oh, then, it *was* a boat—I saw the name on the—the bow." The captain didn't want to seem to be making fun, but a boat without a bottom, built of two side boards of a bedstead joined in an acute angle, with three seats, and its name painted in green—a dry land boat, that never sailed anywhere but on the high seas of play—was enough to make any seafaring man's eyes twinkle.

"Oh, yes," explained Hippy eagerly. "That's our boat, where we play shipwreck, or flood, and sometimes we go in it to discover the poles. Those things made of broomsticks standing over there in the corner of the cave are really oars. You see, we just love the sea, and we haven't even a single river, just Pitter-Patter Brook. Aunt Kitty gave me a seashell, that just sings, and sings, when you hold it to your ear—it's the waves made it sing, Mal says. I thought maybe it was homesick, so I took

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it to the brook and left it a whole day, but it sings, just the same. I guess when the trees talk in the wind it sounds like the sea, doesn't it, Captain Page? I just wish I could sit in a tree once, and I'd make believe the leaves were the waves and I'd sail away and away. Vi and Mal tried to tell me how it seems up in a tree, but . . . Oh, I was going to tell you about the *Dash-away*. You see, we did want a boat, or a ship, or something, so bad, so the boys made one out of the old bedstead. Mrs. Bassbinder, that's Silva's mother, said it was a dreadful waste and we ought to have given it to somebody; but mamma said it made us so happy she guessed it paid for itself. And we do have lovely times" (Hippy had forgotten she was tired of it all); "why, when we've been playing wreck and are out in a little boat, and Mal only lets us have bites of bread, and weeny sips of water—and once Plug soaked an old shoe and wanted us to chew on that, but we just wouldn't—well, when it gets to be days and days, and we're most starved to death, and Vi stands

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in the bow and calls 'Land ho!' why, shivers just run up and down your back. Once Silva and I both cried, and even Mal didn't say we were silly. Oh, we just love the *Dashaway*. Mal says some day maybe we'll build a really ship."

Now Captain Page, with the child heart, didn't laugh a bit at Hippy's story, though Silva, who had slipped out to work at her garland again, stole a look at him to see if he wouldn't. Indeed, he looked toward the rock where the *Dashaway* lay sunning herself, with a smile quite as if he understood.

"That's the way Jimmie Cuyler and I used to play. Our boat was a wagon bed and we called her the *Ranger*. Sometimes we took Sister Kitty on a voyage."

"Oh, I know, Aunt Kitty told us. And once she fell overboard, right among the daisies, and she was playing so hard she just shut her eyes and thought sure she would drown, 'til Jimmie fished her out," giggled Hippy. "That's what made us think of the *Dashaway*. Isn't it fun? Oh, there comes Mr. Sailorman. Oh, goody!"

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And, sure enough, there came Sandy, staggering down the hillside under such a load of moss, and logs, and "little stumpy things" one wondered how he managed it.

"Ship ahoy!" shouted the captain, making a trumpet of his hands. "What ship's that?"

"The Sandy Slack!" sang out Sandy.

"What port?" roared the captain.

"Out o' Woods!"

"Where bound?"

"Treasure Cave!" bellowed Sandy, "laden with furnishin's. Owners the Scowlin' Scoots!"

"Oh— isn't it fun? Isn't it, Silva?" laughed Hippy. "Oh, goody, goody!" And even shy Silva had to hop a little, as Sandy dumped down before the cave entrance bundles of velvety green moss, great pieces of it, that he had carefully peeled from the old logs that lay in the upper wood.

"If that isn't enough, Miss Hippy," panted Sandy, mopping his face with his red cotton handkerchief, "why, this wessel can be chartered for another v'yage."

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“Oh, thank you, thank you, Mr. Sandy, but I guess we have heaps and plenty . . and oh, such beautiful rugs!” cried Hippy, as strip after strip—the captain and Sandy enjoying the pretty work as much as the girls—was unwrapped and spread out over the floor of the cave, until from rocky wall to rocky wall stretched an unbroken carpet of beautiful green moss. There were the two little log settees, their fringing brown bark studded with lichens and emerald mosses, and the “little stumpy things,” bits of logs, with prongs of roots for arms and legs, were set about, the grey walls hung with festoons of buttercups and daisies, and every niche and cubby hole tucked full of ferns and wild roses—why, then everybody acknowledged himself perfectly charmed with Silva’s scrumptious plan.

It was the captain who suggested leaving all the left-over bits of moss to lay about the pretty spring where the cool, wet rock would keep it moist, but it was Sandy who, after a whispered consultation with the captain, set off on a jog trot toward Redroof,

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to come back a few moments later loaded with sea shells and corals. *Then* you should have seen Hippy's eyes.

"Me and the captain had 'em stowed away in our ditty boxes for jest such a joyous occasion as this," chuckled Sandy, "and Mis' Gordon she sent some."

Oh, such shells of amber, and rose, and brown, and opal, fluted, and fretted, and crumpled, and scalloped; such coral of pink, and yellow, and white! Why, in ten minutes that little spring was like a beautiful jewel box with these gems that nestled on the green moss, or glinted up through the water, or gleamed amid the ivy sprays that fringed the rock.

"*Oh! . . . Oh! . . . Oh!*" crooned Hippy to a sort of a tune, as she laid a pink shell, crimped at the edge like a rose petal, in a nest of fern and moss. "*Oh! . . . Oh! . . . Oh! I'm so happy I just have to sing it. Oh! . . . Oh! . . . Oh! nobody ever had such a beautiful birthday as this—and oh, won't mamma be happy?—and oh, isn't everybody good, and dear Aunt Kitty,*

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and the Captain, and Mr. Sandy, and Silva? —I don't believe any girl ever had such friends before—Oh! . . . Oh! . . . Oh!"

At last everything was in order, and the captain and Sandy crossed the meadow, the captain talking earnestly to Sandy, who once stopped to slap his leg and chuckle. They had promised to return for the surprise party, and carried a loving and urgent invitation to Aunt Kitty. Then Hippy and Silva reluctantly dragged themselves away, for there was much to be done. First there was Winnie to entreat for heart-shaped cookies—she was famous for them—but, let me tell you, to coax Winnie was a task requiring tact and valour, and only dauntless courage such as Hippy's could hope for success.. Then there was Minnie's cake to ask for, but that was an easy matter. Indeed, Minnie clapped her hands for joy, as the little girls excitedly told their story, and she offered at once lemonade, tea, cheese straws, rusks, cold chicken, cream slaw, and beet pickles, in fact, everything in her pan-

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try, and her own personal services, and every offer was gratefully accepted.

For an hour the meadow lay drowsing in the hot sunshine, deserted save by birds and butterflies and bees, but by-and-by, along the top of the stone wall that divided Redroof from the meadow, came pell-melling, first two boys, next a slim gipsy of a girl in red, with her sunbonnet hanging down her back, and last a chubby little chap who panted along behind.

"One, two, three!" called the leader.

"One, two, three!" echoed his band, and down they sprang into the daisy-dotted meadow. Vivian took the leap like a bird, and Rog like a rubber ball, for, though he rolled, he bounced and came up six feet from the wall to tear after the others, who were headed for Treasure Cave at top speed.

They were warm, they were tired, and they were as near blueness as it was possible for a Scowling Scoot to be. All morning they had played scout, creeping under bushes, climbing into trees, and over walls,

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and though Aunt Kitty had waved them a friendly hand now and then, and old Aunt Chat, whose heart was tender, had brought them out a plate of gingerbread, not one rewarding glimpse for all their suffering had they had, either of the captain or the sailor. Evidently they were in town, or "sick-a-bed," though Aunt Chat assured them that "Cap'in Jack and his sailorman is jest 'roun', jest 'roun'." Now the harum-scarum pack were coming back home for rest and refreshment. Gingerbread is a crumby and thirst-giving food, and the day was warm, so straight to the spring headed the Scowling Scoots.

"Whoa up!" shouted Mal, stopping suddenly in his wild rush and pointing dramatically at the spring.

"Ot zing!" marvelled Plug, staring open mouthed at the shells.

"Fairies!" gasped Vivian.

"Then they've got big feet," panted out Rog, who had just come up, and stood pointing to a huge footprint in the soft earth, just where the spring overflowed and gur-

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gled down the ravine. "It's Crusoe's man Friday!"

"It's—it's—not!" choked Vivian. "Don't you see, you stupid things? While we have been skulking around like so many idiots—and it's all your fault, Mal Helter, why—why"—and a tear trickled down Vi's hot cheek—"the captain and the sailor have been here. Where else could all these lovely things have come from?"

"It's all your fault, Mal Helter," echoed Rog. "I just wish I'd stayed with Hippy and Silva."

At the first mention of the girls Plug plunged around the rock to the cave with the others at his heels.

"Oh," moaned Vivian, as all the wonders of the cave broke in upon them. "You see, you see! Hippy and Silva could never have gotten up into the woods. Oh, they have had a beautiful time with the captain and the sailorman. Oh, dear!"

But already Mal had broken into a run, and behind him pelted Plug and Rog.

"Where are you going?" shrieked Vi,

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running after. "Where are you going?"

"After the traitors, of course," called back Mal. "There are more ways than one of being a villy-viley sneak."

All unknown and unprepared, Silva and Hippy stood in Minnie's kitchen with big blue gingham aprons tied up under their chins, beating eggs for the cake and grating cheese for the straws, as innocent and placid as two doves, when all at once around the corner of the house dashed the avengers.

"My conscience! What's up? Have you seen a hoop-snake?" screamed Minnie, as Mal, and Plug, and Roger, followed by Vi, came lunging into the kitchen.

"Uh-er!" wailed Silva Luna, running to hide her face in the roller towel.

Only Hippy—pale but brave—faced the vengeful four.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"Matter!" sputtered Vi. "Matter! I guess you and Silva pretty well know."

"You two are—are traitors," gasped Mal.

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It wasn't so easy to say with Hippy's brave, truthful eyes fixed on one.

"A traitor to what?" Her eyes sparkled now, for Hippy was not a meek soul.

"To the Scowling Scoots," broke in Mal. "You knew we were hovering to see the captain and sailor, and here you have had a dandy time with them, and fixed up the cave and the spring, and you never called us."

"No, I didn't," said Hippy, "and you didn't ask me in on your present either. I know I haven't a cent, but you might have been polite enough to ask me."

"Present?" gasped Vi.

"Yes, present; I suppose you're getting mamma a present," said Hippy with dignity; "and the captain and Mr. Sandy did come and help us; but it was Silva's scrumptious plan, and we didn't want to call you, for it is to be a surprise party, but we are going to invite you, of course, so we're not traitors."

"Surprise party?" gasped Vi again.

"Why, yes, it's Silva's and my present,

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for mamma's birthday, and Winnie's making heart-cookies, and . . ."

"Mamma's birthday," shrieked Vi. "Oh, Mal, we'd forgotten it. Whatever shall we do?"

CHAPTER VI

THEIR SHIP COMES IN

MRS. HELTER'S birthday was a complete success, from Winnie's heart-cookies—never so many, nor so crisp—to the wonderful bottle of perfumery Vivian had gone all the way to town to bring, though the time was brief and the day was warm. Not that Vivian set out to buy perfumery, far from it, for after a deal of discussion and a consultation with Minnie, it had been decided that Vivian should take part of their money and buy a dozen tumblers, which were much needed. But, as fate would have it, Vi, in passing the very first drugstore, saw in the window a bottle of perfumery—an immense bottle holding somewhat less than a quart of liquid odour. Within the bottle's vivid green depths, and peeping coquettishly through its sides, were two embalmed white carnations and a pink rose. Oh, it did look so rich, and

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so "sort of birthdayish," as Vivian afterward confessed to Minnie—tumblers, just common, white glass tumblers, from which to drink common, cold water, seemed so poor and trifling after this. Still, Vivian didn't mean to buy it when she slipped into the store. Indeed, she hardly meant to buy it when she counted out the money to see if she had enough, she just wanted to see, but . . . but . . . Oh, well, Mal and Roger were charmed when she dashed into the kitchen with the bottle clasped close to her breast, and Minnie didn't say much. It was only Bassbinder's Winnie, who being there, grumbled something under her breath about fools and their money. As for the little mother, she was perfectly delighted, though the big bottle had cost far more than the price of the tumblers, and she couldn't use the perfumery because of the flowers, and besides she didn't care for scents—but that precious bottle stands on her dressing-table to this present day.

It was Hippy's gift of a surprise party that was best, since it made so many people

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happy. You should have seen little Mrs. Helter enjoy that party—why, she wore her best white gown and a rose in her hair, for, you see, Hippy just couldn't keep a secret. Mrs. Gordon came to the party all in lavender, under her white parasol, without a hat, which made Hippy fairly teeter with delight, it gave to the party such an air. And the captain . . . and Sandy . . . oh, those two dear men! Even Mrs. Bassbinder, stiff and starched in her fresh green and white lawn, said, "Mercy on us," in a hushed sort of voice, when the two, the captain walking a little in front—a-glitter in blue and gold—and Sandy—grinning over a big basket of good things—in full sailor togs, from the ribbon on his hat to the trail of his trousers—came swinging across the meadow. If all the grown people came in such party spirits, you can imagine how those children revelled.

Sandy and the twin maids served the supper, and there were games afterward, and singing, and stories told. Indeed, the old bullfrog in the ravine had "gu-rup, gu-

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rup, gu-rupped," for a full hour, and the new moon hung low above the meadow like a silver boat with her prow in a cloud, before the party broke up, and even then Hippy hopped along the narrow path with her hand in the captain's, they had grown to be such friends.

Next day, to the disgust of the Scowling Scoots, the captain and Sandy, after having shown themselves so delightfully chummy, suddenly developed a dreadful fascination for town. That day and the next and the next, and the day after, off they went early in the morning and never came back until late afternoon, and even then they were so intent about some work of Martin's in the orchard just back of Redroof that they seemed to have no time for children. Oh, to be sure, they spoke to them, and the captain was very friendly; but er—er—well, sort of mysterious, and Sandy and Martin chuckled together such a lot—but if there was any joke they didn't offer to share it, and it got on one's nerves.

Then Mrs. Gordon sent Aunt Chat over

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to Mrs. Helter with a great bundle of heavy white muslin. Aunt Chat just grinned until every tooth gleamed, as she said, "Well, if dese yer chil'en . . ." but just then their mother said, "Sh-sh-sh, Aunt Chat," ever so softly, for Vivian heard. That afternoon Aunt Kitty came over and then Mrs. Bassbinder, and they had their scissors and their thimble, why, even Vivian, and Silva, and Hippy, were invited to join the sewing bee; but though they were allowed to sew rows of crooked, sprawling stitches along the lengths of white stuff they were not told what they were making. The things weren't sheets, nor curtains, nor gowns, but they had shape and were cut to measurements—and those three ladies just looked wise and said, "Hush, my dear," to each other, and "little pitchers have big ears," and "won't somebody have round eyes?" and other equally impolite, grown-up things, until those Scowling Scoots, from Vivian to Rog, were bubbles, just mere puffy, piffy bubbles of curiosity that might burst at any minute. A week had gone by, the muslin

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things were finished, folded and lay ready—but, oh, for what? Even mild Mr. Bassbinder seemed charged with the electric current that filled the valley, and every evening he walked about the orchard at Redroof, with his hands behind him, and his hat on the back of his head, viewing the results of Martin's labours and speaking softly to the captain.

What Martin had done didn't seem to amount to much. He had cut all the top out of a big old apple-tree, until four great branches stuck up awkwardly in the air, "as if they were holding up arms for something, when there isn't anything to hold," Hippy said. Then Martin and Sandy had set up a derrick with ropes and pulleys, and now they just all seemed, when at home, to do nothing but walk around, squinting up and squinting down, talking wisely of what they had done, and chuckling, always chuckling.

Early Wednesday morning the captain drove off with Sandy in the trap, and how he did chuckle when he saw all the Scowling

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Scoots, even Pester, watching them! Hippy sat on her post, with her crutch tucked under her arm, but her smile, as she lifted her little face to the captain, was a wee bit crooked, for it did seem that everyday games had lost their savour since the captain had come home, and the birthday party had been such a glowing red-letter day, these other days seemed wan and pale. Oh, if only the captain and Sandy would stay home and play!

The captain's quick eye hardly caught that "wee bit" crooked smile before he pulled up Prince and, leaning far over the wheel, said, in his cheery way:

"How now, little shipmates? Down in the mouth a trifle? Oh, that will never do! All the morning chores done? I thought not," as the six shook their heads mournfully. "Well, you fly around and get them all done up, and at—well, say in two hours—how is that, Sandy? Well, then say two hours and a half, all of you be out here at the gate and you will see the sight of your lives. Go along, Prince, go along."

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"Now what did he mean by that?" complained Plug, as Prince went trotting down the road, leaving a trail of dust in his wake.

"Oh! . . . Oh!" chanted Vivian, skipping a giddy measure in the path. "It's coming at last . . . the something . . . the lovely something!"

"It's been a long time about it," grumbled Mal, trying to look unconcerned.

"I bet it's a circus," piped Rog.

"Oh, I know!" broke in Hippy, her little pale face aglow. "Maybe it is a ship. Maybe our ship is coming in, like mamma always says."

"Pooh!—ba!" jeered everybody good-naturedly. "How would a ship sail up this dusty road?" "Think ships fly, Hippy?" "Pooh. Rog's guess is better than that."

"I don't care," returned Hippy gallantly with her nose in the air. "My captain and Sandy could sail a ship up the road, if they wanted to, couldn't they, Silva?"

Such scurrying into place as everything got that morning! Such flying around, and hustling and falling to! Chores seemed ac-

THEIR SHIP COMES IN

tually to do themselves, so quickly were they finished.

"Pity there ain't somethin' comin' by every mornin'," grumbled Bassbinder's Winnie, as she saw her well-filled wood box and water pails.

Before the two hours were up every Scowling Scoot, tired and breathless, but supremely happy and ready for anything, settled himself or herself on the flat board that topped Helter's fence. Pester sat in the road.

Moments have a way of poking when moments should fly, as everyone well knows, so Hippy proposed a grass concert to help pass the time. Seating herself upon her favourite post, a feathery grass stalk for a baton, she led with her high soprano her orchestra, who blew on a grass blade set between each pair of thumbs. "*Squeakety squeakety, la-la-la, squeakety, squeakety, squeakety-squawk*," ran the music, and Pester, still sitting in the road, one ear up and the other ear down, threw back his head and wailed most dismally.

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They were so carried away by their discord and music that not a member of that orchestra heard, nor saw, something that was moving slowly, slowly up the dip—out of the wood and up the dip—coming ponderously, creakingly, up the road.

“*La-la-la!*” sang Hippy, at the top of her voice. “*Squeakety-squawk!*” shrilled the orchestra, “*oo-oo-wow!*” wailed Pester, with eyes tight shut.

“*La-la-la!*” but just then Hippy’s glance went up the road—just then Hippy gave a breathless, gasping sigh—her little face went pale, then red as a rose, and then, oh, then——

“Our ship’s come in! Our ship’s come in!” she cried, swinging herself to her crutch and pointing with her feathery grass blade up the road to where——

But then they, turning, saw it, too, and pandemonium broke loose—for oh, if I could only tell you as I saw it—there down the road came a noble vessel. One scarcely saw the wheels beneath her, nor the horses that pulled her, but there she hove white as

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a snowflake from bow to stern; her masts pointing majestically toward the sky; at her peak the flag was flying; her figurehead—and such a figurehead!—lifting itself fiercely above the driver's head. No tiny play ship this; though too lightly built for sailing, her twenty-five feet lengthened endlessly to the eyes of the Scowling Scoots. Sandy in all his sailor togs posed statuesquely forward with his tattooed arm wreathed about the foremast, while bringing up the rear in the trap was the captain, laughing like any boy.

How those children shouted and how they shrieked! There were Mrs. Bassbinder and Winnie on the porch, and there came Mrs. Helter and Minnie down the path, and behind them came Mrs. Gordon, followed by Aunt Chat, and Martin, and even Hulda, everybody happy to tears, seeing that ecstasy of joy that had rolled like a mighty wave over those crazy children.

“My dear! my dear!” cried Mrs. Gordon, seizing prancing Hippy. “You’ll kill yourself.”

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“Rog! Rog!” cautioned little Mrs. Helter. “Vivian, Mal, don’t make yourselves hoarse. Plug, my dear boy, your face is like fire. Do stop your hubbub, everybody. Pester Helter, be quiet, sir!”

But, standing aloof, her eyes like stars, Silva Luna chewed her bonnet string.

CHAPTER VII

LAUNCHING OF THE FURIOUS ROVER

CREAK - CREAK," strained the wagon under the big ship; for once more she had started on her way. Behind her in the road came the Scowling Scoots, with Pester chasing wildly, now to this side, now to that, in a very blur of dust and barking frenzy.

Mrs. Gordon, the mothers and servants, had gone sensibly the back way, through the quiet and cool of Helter's grounds; but not so with the children—what were heat and dust to them? They darted and capered about the ship like dolphins, but Hippy—she rode in state in the bow by Sandy.

"*She* can't walk, sir, with that crutch," the sailor had suggested in a low tone to the captain.

"Certainly not, lift her up," said Captain Page, and so there sat Hippy, as happy as

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any little Egyptian queen in her galley. Silva Luna in her shyness had refused to join her and skipped solemnly along by herself.

"Where are we going, Mr. Sandy?" Hippy asked, her face sparkling with joy. "She can't sail in Pitter-Patter brook, nor the grotto—they are too little, and there isn't another bit of water, but the fountain and the duck pond."

"Oh, she'll sail all right where she's bound. Sandy Slack will lay to that, little lady," replied he.

"Oh, Hippy, you just ought to see what a jawsy figurehead!" called Plug, prancing along under the ship's bow.

"I can see the back of his head from here. He isn't an angel, is he, Plug?" asked Hippy. "I thought figureheads were always angels."

"Not this one, sweetheart," laughed the captain. "I never dreamed a band of Scowling Scoots would care for an angel figurehead for the *Furious Rover*, even if I could have gotten one small enough."

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"Angel? Why, Hippy Helter! He'd make a funny looking angel!" panted up Rog, as he loped alongside. "He's a dandy pirate. That's what he is."

"Pirate—I should say he is!" broke in Mal. "He's got jack boots, and a sash, and a cutlass in one hand——"

"And a pistol in the other," added Vivian.

"And he has got a dagger in his teeth," went on the chief of the Scoots, "and his eyes are painted black with lots of white around 'em so they sort of follow you—and he's got a red handkerchief twisted around his head and big brass rings in his ears."

"I can see *them*," contentedly returned Hippy.

"And, oh, Hippy, his black moustache is curled clear up to his eyes, and his teeth glisten something awful on his dagger—and oh, he is just *sweet!*" broke out Vi again, as she danced along backward, looking up admiringly at the figurehead.

"He—he sounds awful!" replied Hippy. "Silva, Silva Luna!" she called back to the

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quiet little body who skipped behind. "You have seen the figurehead, is—is he cute?"

Silva shook her head most emphatically.

"Why, Miss Hippy," broke out old Sandy, "that figgerhead there is 'most like a brother to me. I have knowed him since I was his model for size. He used to be stuck up in front of an old wood carver's shop for a sign in Salem, where I was born, and I use to think, I did so, bein' a kind of a lonely little codger, not havin' no mother, nor nothin', I use to think when I got a man I would build me a little wessel and have been painted up, just as you now see. I did that same, and when I found the captain was a-goin' to sail this tidy little craft, I just urged him on to send for it, if so be it was still there, and it were, and the old man's folks most glad to sell it. So here be us two a sailin' together, just as I used to dream when I wasn't much bigger nor him," and Sandy jerked his horny thumb toward the furious little figurehead in the bow, and beaming, cuddled his chin in his throat whiskers.

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"Oh, I am so glad we have got him," cried Hippy. "Thank you so much for telling me, Mr. Sandy, I just love him now," and Hippy reached down to pat the wooden cheek of the figurehead, "but, oh, where are we going?" for now the big wagon was slowly turning into Redroof driveway.

"Oh, oh!" yelled Mal and Plug together, as if a sudden and an illuminating idea had struck them at the same instant, and away they tore with barking Pester, and after them flew Vi, and after tagged Rog—up the drive, across the lawn, to disappear behind Redroof.

At the foot of the old apple-tree with its "four arms held up with nothing to hold," just by the derrick and the pulleys, they found everybody gathered when the driver trumpeted his final "whoa."

"Why, why," gasped Hippy, "there isn't any water here!"

"And here is the little shipmate who wanted to sail in the tree-tops, and who put all this into my head, and yet she doesn't understand," said the captain, catching her up

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to sit on his shoulder, crutch and all. "Three cheers for the little captain of the *Furious Rover*—Captain Hippy Helter, three cheers and a tiger!"

"Rah! rah! rah!" shouted everybody—but Hippy—why, Hippy just hugged the captain's old grey head and cried.

But dear, dear, this was no time for crying. The masts were taken out of the ship while the careful captain marked the "danger line," outside of which everyone but Sandy, and Martin, and the village carpenter, and the driver must stay, and then, after much calling, and ordering, and tying of ropes—oh, my heart, there she swung, free of the wagon—and then creak, creak, and up, and up, away in the air!—slowly, slowly, as high as the tree-tops!

"Hurrah! hurrah!"

Then down she settled, slowly, slowly, until, oh joy! she rested in the brooding arms of that old apple-tree, like a bird in its nest, her bow in one tree, her stern in another, and all about her the leafy green, that whispered, and whispered against her keel.

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There she hung, but Hippy wondered—if one had two good feet—why, then——

But, after all, the work was only begun; it was “stand from under everybody,” “outside that danger line, sir,” as creak, creak, up went masts and spars—but that, too, was only the beginning. There was stepping the masts, and the ticklish business of setting up the standing rigging—that took managing, I can tell you, for Sandy had hard work to climb those tiny shrouds. But, oh, he did it—and how he shouted, “ay, ay, sir,” to the captain’s orders, and how red his face got with chuckling, and how his eyes twinkled, and how he cuddled his chin, as he saw those Scowling Scoots, with upturned faces in one ecstatic dream of happiness. Then Minnie went flying to the house, only to come flying back again with both arms full.

“Oh, oh!” shrieked Hippy, “why, Silva, don’t you see what Minnie has? It’s the sails. We helped make the sails—we helped, Vi, and Silva, and I, we made the lovely ship’s sails, and we never knew it.”

Just then Silva was discovered with eyes

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tight shut, arms outstretched, wheeling around slowly, as if she were wound up, like a green and white gingham top.

“Merciful goodness!” cried her mother, catching her up. “What is the matter with you, Silva Luna, have you gone and lost your wits?”

“Don’t, ma,” whispered Silva, with her face hidden upon her mother’s comfortable shoulder. “Please let me down, ma. I’m so full I just have to—I have to ring-around-a-rosey, or I’ll die.”

But a shadow was creeping over Hippy. Her eyes lost a bit of their sparkle, her cheeks a bit of their rose. If only . . . yet she smiled up at the captain and Sandy as bravely as ever, so how could the captain know?—he hadn’t walked with a little crutch all the days of his life.

It was wonderful to see the captain and Sandy bend the sails—Sandy said they seemed like pocket handkerchiefs—but at last everything was ready, every sail set; lazing in the golden sunshine, in the wash of her leafy green waves, white

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as any bride, she rested, her flag at her peak, her figurehead fixing his rapacious gaze toward Treasure Cave and the *Dash-away*.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" shouted Mal and Plug, and as if no danger line could hold them longer, up the old apple-tree they shinned like two monkeys.

"Hold hard, there!" shouted the captain. "How do you think you'll lay aboard that way? Go back, you two, go back! Sandy, let down the jack ladder, or they will knock a hole in her hull and scuttle us."

Up the swaying ladder swarmed those happy boys, followed closely by Rog, and then by Vi, who by dint of coaxing and almost tears had permission to follow, while Winnie and Minnie steadied the ladder as best they could. Hippy shifted her crutch and sighed.

"Oh, oh!" shouted the happy four. "Oh, say, but it's jolly up here. Come up Silva, come up." For Silva Luna stood below looking up that little ladder as if heaven topped it.

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But no one said, "Come up, Hippy," because they knew she couldn't, she thought—yet Captain Page had called her Captain Hippy.

Oh, well, she had ridden in the ship, that was something—but oh, to be in the tree-tops, to sit beneath those white sails, and hear the leaves whisper—oh, to have two good feet, she wouldn't be standing below looking up like Silva—oh me! Hippy gulped back a sob. All this time the captain and Sandy had been doing something at the side of the vessel, then out swung the davits and down came a little chair, safe as a cradle, with arms and a comfortable back.

"Hurrah for Captain Hippy! She is coming aboard," shrieked the four.

"Hurrah for Captain Hippy!" called Captain Page. "There's your gig, little captain."

"Oh!" breathed Hippy—but just then she saw Silva Luna still looking up that little ladder with heaven at the top. "Silva Luna's coming up first," she called, making a trumpet of her hands.

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“Ay, ay, little captain,” shouted Sandy.

“I . . . I thought they’d forgotten me,” she confessed in a whisper when the chair had swung back and her mother was tucking her safely in, crutch and all. “I thought I couldn’t go up.”

“Forgotten—why, my precious lamb-kin,” cried her mother, then she kissed Hippy in the way she loved best and whispered in the little-girl manner that made Mrs. Helter so lovable: “Just you remember always that mother said, little lump of sugar, that you will never be forgotten all your life long, ’cause why? ’cause you’re so sweet.” Then away swung the little chair, and up and up went Hippy, the happiest little girl in Tillatoba Valley.

CHAPTER VIII

ON BOARD

OF course they couldn't live at that high pressure all the time, and when they had hurrahed themselves hoarse, and examined every nook and corner of the *Furious Rover*, which didn't take long—the pretty little cabin and galley, about the size of a packing case and a band box, were still unfurnished, of course—and then hurrahed some more, why, then, they settled down to comfortable happiness, which, after all, is best.

They even went home to lunch, and ate as hungry boys and girls should, though that is a little hard to believe, but you should have seen them coming back. Every one of them, even Hippy with her crutch, had sea legs on, and found land walking most difficult; they certainly did “wallop” even more beautifully than Sandy that first day—and

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how the boys hitched their trousers and “shivered their timbers” and “split their sides!”—even rosy little Rog was discovered trying to cuddle his chin in his blue necktie—and wasn’t it all the greatest fun?

At the foot of the ship’s ladder they found the captain and Sandy waiting to go up again and then it was Aunt Kitty’s turn to surprise everybody.

They were hardly up when Martin came across the orchard with a big bundle.

“With Mrs. Gordon’s compliments to the captain and the crew of the *Furious Rover*, and may she sail a safe voyage and soon home again,” called up old Martin as the parcel was hoisted carefully over the side.

“Oh, goody!” cried Hippy, when she had had her first peep. “It’s pots and pans for the kitchen.”

“*Kitchen*—the galley, you mean,” corrected Plug, looking very wise, “you never say kitchen on a ship; do you, captain?”

“Well, for the galley, then,” amended Hippy, “and oh, here is a little alcohol

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stove, and dishes, and towels, and soap, and napkins, and oh, just everything. Oh, goody! now Sandy will show us girls how to fix them all up shipshape."

But even the boys didn't scorn to take a hand in the ship's housekeeping, when they remembered how Jim Hawkins used to visit Long John Silver aboard the *Hispaniola* on her voyage to "Treasure Island."

"Oh, captain," broke out Mal. "Don't you remember 'Cap'an Flint,' John Silver's parrot, always hung in the galley? Let's have the Admiral in ours, he'd be jolly."

"Oh do, captain," begged Hippy, "and I'll be Long John, with his crutch, and do the cooking. I can do that lots better than being captain, and Vi just hates housework. Besides, you're the real captain of the *Furious Rover*, anyway."

"Just suit yourself, little shipmate," agreed the captain; though the idea of Hippy as Long John caught him with a chuckle. "You be cook, and we'll have the Admiral in the galley and 'Mother' shall be the ship's cat. I think she's been pining

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for sea breezes, and she will never know the difference when she is afloat on these leafy waves."

"And oh, can't we have Pester, too?" coaxed Vi, who always wanted a little more; "he is whining down there like anything."

"Well, we can try it," laughed Captain Page, "and see how it will work."

But, mercy! It didn't work at all. The Admiral swung himself in his gilt ring and called his "Heave, ho, heave!" and his "Ay, ay, sir," like the old sea-dog he was, and "Mother" sat in the bow curling her tail over her fore paws as "happy as a clam," Vi said—but alas, poor "Mother"! The moment Pester, with much difficulty, was lifted aboard:

"Bow-wow!"

"Spit, spit!"

And there was "Mother" in the cross-trees, with Pester barking himself hoarse at the foot of the mast.

"It's dog, or cat," said the captain firmly.

"It's cat, then," decided Vi, "for Mother

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wasn't doing a thing to him, and she's the ship's cat and Pester is only a land-lubber anyway." So down went Pester, to get a crick in his neck looking up at Mother, who blinked at the sparrows on the limb, as she had at the robin in the grass, and the flying fish in the South Seas. It was all one to Mother.

Now housekeeping on a ship is hungry work and even Hippy was longing for a cooky, when Rog suddenly wished with a big sigh, that:

"The *Furious Rover* had a cargo of nothing but crullers and hard-boiled eggs." And even as he said it——

"Bumboat ahoy!" the captain was shouting, for he had just sighted Aunt Chat and Hulda bringing a big basket covered with snowy linen.

"Oh, the bumboat, the bumboat!" shouted everybody, leaning far out over the side.

"Miss Kitty was 'fraid yo' all would be sta'vin' on yo' sailin' trip," called up Hulda. "Don't none ob yo' chillen tumble ovah

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board. Don't believe one ob yo' knows how to swim."

"Oh, Aunt Chat," cried Hippy, "you and Hulda are the nicest bumboat ever was."

"Go back from dat aige, chil'," shrieked Aunt Chat. "Mars Jack, do hol' on to her li'le petticoats! If dat angel chil' fall ovah board dis ol nigger's hawt would be broke. Do hol' on, honeys, all ob yo'."

Up came the basket, and oh, dear, tree-top sailing is certainly good for the appetite—and anyway Minnie always said the Helter Skelters were hollow to their toes. Eyes were shining, I can tell you, as Sandy began handing out the good things.

"I'm glad it is all cooked for to-day," sighed Hippy, "I'm so excited I don't believe I could even boil the kettle."

"Hands like ice, too," said the captain, taking one of her fluttering little hands in his. "Too much excitement, Hippy, isn't good for little girls. Here, simmer down, everybody! Sandy is going to tell us a story while we are at mess. Draw it mild, Sandy."

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Let's have coral islands, South Seas, parrots and palm trees."

"Oh, Sandy, do let it be about taboos," and "Oh, have an awful storm, Sandy, and a dandy wreck," and "Sandy, please call out the orders, won't you? All the 'Ay, ay, sirs,' and everything," and "Oh, do have some cannibals, nice creepy ones, Sandy," "But please, Mr. Sandy, don't let anybody get hurt." So they all begged and ordered, a-twitter with expectation, all but Silva; she just ate her sandwich and stroked Mother, who curled up in her lap.

Then Sandy wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and cuddled his chin and began.

It was a jolly, stirring tale—but "Draw it mild," would come the captain's order, and "Ay, ay, sir," would return Sandy, and once again the shark that snapped too close for "comfort" flashed back under the sea, or the poisoned arrow went wild, or the starving boat's crew shouted "Sail ho!"

CHAPTER IX

A ROW IN THE DASHAWAY

IT was a perfect morning, the world lay fresh and gay, full of sunshine and bird song, and bloom, as if it were newly made. It was not quite seven; Mal and Rog were still busy with the morning chores, Vivian was helping Minnie with the breakfast, but Hippy sat in the *Dashaway*, rowing with the broomstick oars, singing softly, as if she were crooning to a baby:

“‘Lightly row, lightly row,
O'er the glassy waves we go . . .’”

The seat in the bow was heaped with field flowers, and as Hippy rowed in the deep dewy grass she was careful never to lift her eyes beyond the meadow toward the *Furious Rover*, who, dagger in teeth, seemed to be raging to give the *Dashaway* chase.

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Already Hippy had watered the moss in Treasure Cave from the broken-nosed jug, and visited the seashells in the grotto. Her duties were always self-imposed, since the little crutch interfered sadly with most work, but it always was she who took care of any ailing pet, or spindling plant, or anything animate, or inanimate, she felt was neglected and needed comfort.

She was so absorbed with the business in hand she did not know Captain Page was coming 'til he hailed her with a merry "*Dashaway* ahoy!" from tiger rock.

"Where bound, Hippy?" he called, gaily waving his cap. "Saw you from my window, early bird, and came down, longing for a row. No objection to a passenger, I hope?" he inquired as he came alongside.

"No, indeed, Captain Page," laughed Hippy, though she flushed a bit. "Come aboard. Where shall we go?" she asked, as the captain, laughing at himself, and pretending to carefully keep his balance, stepped in and doubled himself up on the stern seat of the bed-rails.



"HIPPIY SAT IN THE *DASHAWAY*, ROWING WITH
THE BROOMSTICK OARS"

A ROW IN THE DASHAWAY

"Wherever you were bound, I know it must be a pleasant port, for you were singing as sweetly as a little dickey bird."

Hippy didn't answer for a minute, then she slowly shipped her oars and flushing yet rosier, she presently said:

"I suppose I am the biggest silly, captain, and I haven't even told mamma, for fear she would laugh at me, but . . . but, you see, I was comforting the *Dashaway*. Since we got the *Furious Rover* and Treasure Cave all fixed up, no one ever looks at the poor old *Dashaway* any more, and we did have such good times in her. It seems so ungrateful," she hesitated again, and then went on more quickly, "I just felt as if her feelings were hurt, and so in the mornings, when everyone is busy, and I come to water the moss, why, why, I just put some flowers in her bow, and sing to her a little, and pretend that the *Rover* isn't up there."

"That seems to me a very dear thing in you, Hippy child," said the captain smiling at her. "Of course, one ought not to grow

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too imaginative, too fanciful, or one might sometimes mistake fancy for truth, but to have such a kindly, grateful thought, even if it is for only a bed-rail boat, will help my little girl's heart keep tender, and I know she is all the better for comforting the *Dashaway*."

"That's just beautiful of you, Captain Page," declared Hippy, propping her elbows on her knees and setting her chin in the cup of her palms. "But, then, I think you are the most wonderful man. You always understand, whether it is Vi, or Mal, or Silva, or me—you just know. That's just what Aunt Kitty told us about you, before you came; but we never dreamed, even when we were so crazy about your coming, you'd be so —*dear*," and she brought out the word with hesitation as if it hardly expressed it all. "I can see how you would understand Mal, or Plug, because you were a boy once, but I think it is wonderful you understand a little girl with—with that," and Hippy glanced down at the little crutch that lay at her feet. "Mamma understands

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us girls, mamma is so lovely, and Aunt Kitty always does, too; but I—I don't think Mrs. Bassbinder remembers very much about when she was little. But you, oh, Captain Page, you just ought to have heaps of boys and girls of your very own, and then what lovely times you would have!"

"I had a little boy once," said the captain, looking away across the meadow. "His young mother died when he was a baby, and he grew up to be a splendid fellow, an officer in the navy. I am an old man, little shipmate, but you're right about one thing, my boy and I did have good times together, such beautiful times, that the world never seem quite the same after he left it."

"He . . . he died?" questioned Hippy softly, her little face alight with sympathy.

"Oh, yes, long ago. My Edgar was a fine man, and he left a young wife, a beautiful English girl, who followed him within a year, and then, again, there was a little boy left without a mother—my little grandson, Mead, he—why, he is as old as Vivian!"

"Oh," cried Hippy, all interest and de-

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light. "Oh, let's get him to come to Tillatoba Valley. Oh, it would be just beautiful, and Aunt Kitty and mamma could be mothers to him, and we would play we're all brothers and sisters, and you could be our grandfather. Oh, please do let him come, Captain Page."

But the captain shook his head sadly, and after a minute he said:

"I don't know why I told you all this, little shipmate, I rarely talk of it to any one, except my sister, Kitty; but, you see, I have never seen my grandson."

"You never saw him . . . your son's little baby! Oh, Captain Page!" grieved Hippy.

"No, I have never seen him, nor had a letter from him, nor have I any idea what sort of a boy he is," half mused the captain. "I only know my Edgar's son must be a fine little chap. I can't imagine anything different of him."

"And yet you never went to see him," faltered Hippy.

"Well, you see, dear," the captain came

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out of his musing, "it could hardly be otherwise. Since I have told you this much I might as well tell you all. My son married the daughter of a wealthy English nobleman, a proud, stern man, who detested all Americans, and only consented to his daughter's marriage after a long time.

"Then, when my son and his wife both died, Sir Austin, through his attorney, wrote me that, as he had so much more than I to offer the boy, he had this proposition to make me: That he should take the boy for his, for even though Mead could never inherit the title, his grandfather could give him great wealth, a fine education, opportunities, and a position that I could never hope to give him. But Sir Austin made hard terms," and again the captain seemed musing, "hard terms—either he must have the boy, or I. He should be all English, or all American; know only his mother's people, or else his father's; have for a grandfather a nobleman whose estate was historic, or a captain whose home was the sea. There was no choice, he gave me no chance. I dared not take from

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the boy his birthright. The English are a fine race . . .”

“Not a bit finer than the ‘Americans,’” flamed Hippy. “And you said yourself yesterday a captain is a king on his own vessel and that is better than any old nobleman. You said his other grandfather was stern, and horrid, and you . . . *you*, oh, Captain Page, I *am* sorry for Mead! I am so sorry,” and Hippy broke off with a sob.

“There, there, little shipmate”—but the captain was smiling now—“you must not feel sorry for Mead. He is at school, a happy, healthy, English boy, with everything his heart can wish, with a great future before him, and if my heart hungers for him sometimes that can’t be helped. You, dear child, and the rest, are doing a great deal to cure the ache. Your love is a great comfort.”

“Well, we do love you, Captain Page, just with all our hearts,” cried Hippy, her love shining in her eyes. “But . . . but you are most mine—I always tell them that—because I shook hands with you the very first of any Scowling Scoot. It was I

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who loved tree-top waves, and then I . . . I need you most, because of that,” and again Hippy looked down at the little crutch, “and they say I can have the biggest share, which is awfully sweet of them, when they all love you so.”

“Yes, I’ll be yours most, Hippy, because we need each other,” said the captain. “If I had a little granddaughter, I think she would have had just such eyes as yours, because my Edgar’s mother’s were just so blue with such long lashes. That’s so long ago, but I have never forgotten, never.” He paused, then gently added, “But, dear, you say because of the little crutch you need me; is it, then, such a pain to you?”

Hippy’s blue eyes swam with sudden tears, as she smiled up at him, with that brave little crooked smile he loved so much.

“It’s . . . well, it’s a little hard, sometimes,” she hesitated. “Not that I don’t love my little crutch,—it’s been good to me, and we’ve hippety-hopped lots of good times together—but . . . but,” then out it came with a burst, “Oh, Captain, I do so

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want to be like other little girls. I'd like to grow up a pretty lady, like mamma and Aunt Kitty, and . . . and I'll always be different, and people will always be sorry for me—that's the worst, I'd like people to be glad for me."

"Yes?" said the captain in a half question, taking one of her little hands in both of his.

"You see," she went on after a minute, "I always supposed I'd be well when I was really grown up. I didn't know how—and I didn't really think much about it, everyone has been so good and dear to me since I was born and we have had such happy times; but when I was twelve I . . . I asked mamma and she told me—oh, I have the dearest mother and she was so lovely to me then—but she said all the doctors who had ever seen me said I would never be any better, so . . ." but Hippy was still smiling, "so I'll always be just *Hippy Helter*."

"A little crutch can teach great lessons, my darling," said the captain. "It can teach one to be brave, like you. Why, child,

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if I had a little girl who could smile like that with tears in her eyes, I'd call her a hero, and I'd take my cap off to her like this, and I'd love her with all my heart, just as I do you."

"Then," said Hippy, giving her head a bright little toss, "if my captain says that I'll try to be brave every day. Sometimes I do cry a little bit if nobody's looking, but I won't any more, and I'll . . . I'll tell you my most secretly secret, and . . . and you won't tell, for I don't want mamma to worry; but I'm saving every penny I can get in my clay pig—I most begrudge my Hindoo widow money—and when I get enough I am going to go and hunt a new doctor who knows everything, and I will ask him to try—and I won't cry if he most kills me, if he only makes me walk."

"That's the talk, little captain!" said Captain Page, shaking her hand as if he would never let it go. "That's my brave girl! That's my little woman!"

"Breakfast! Breakfast!" cried Minnie from the kitchen door.

CHAPTER X

THE TATTOOING OF THE SCOOTs

THE captain went away, and there was mourning in Tillatoba Valley. Just why he went the children were not told, but blithe Aunt Kitty had a very anxious face at moments when no one was by to see, and Martin, or Sandy went to the village for every mail, though at the end of the week the captain had written but once, and then only to say: "No farther news."

The reason for the captain's journey to New York was in a letter that came soon after his row with Hippy in the *Dashaway*. It was a long letter, cold, and full of legal terms; but the gist of it all was that Sir Austin Frye was dead, and his attorney in London was writing to say that a few days after Sir Austin's death the present baron had a talk with Mead, who had gone

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down from school, during which the boy learned for the first time of his American grandfather, and learned, too, of the great change that must take place in his life, since the estate had now passed from his grandfather to a cousin. Mead, an impulsive lad of fifteen, resented the tone used; indeed, he and his cousin, the new baron, had never agreed, the lawyer said, and that night he ran away. The boy had little money with him and had bade good-bye to no one but his old nurse, to whom he said he would never come back. In all likelihood he had started for America; but, as he knew nothing of his father's people except their name, and that his grandfather was a sea-captain, he might meet with difficulties in his search for Captain Page—in fact the writer considered it not only possible, but probable, since America was so much larger than England, so, perhaps, they would better be on the lookout for the boy.

“Mercy, Jack!” Mrs. Gordon had cried, then, seeing her brother's face, she had hastened to add, “Oh, we will find him. Of

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course, we will find him—it's only a question of a few days."

But so far there was "no news."

Meanwhile the Scowling Scoots, though they lamented their captain, sailed the raging main in the tree-tops; were robbers, or wild Indians, or hermits in Treasure Cave; or Eliza crossing the Ohio on the ice—the part of Eliza being taken by Vivian, who, with her head bound in a red handkerchief, and Jessica clasped close, sprang desperately from rock to rock, pursued by cruel bloodhounds; even Mal, who started out as the slave-trader, always forgetting and bay-ing deep in his throat, in a way that almost drove Pester crazy—or they played jungle, or cannibal, or castaway. Poor Sandy lived among them in a perfect maze.

"Don't you ever sail jest as plain Helters or Bassbinders?" he asked once, when he had watched them capture Hippopotamus rock with much danger to all concerned.

"Just on Sundays," said Hippy, "and then sometimes mamma lets us play Elijah and the ravens, or Elisha and the wicked

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children, if we don't call: 'go up, thou bald head,' too loud."

"Well, I ain't wonderin' Mrs. Bassbinder calls you the Helter Skelters. It jest makes a seaman's wits groggy to be followin' of you up. I played hard and proper when I was a lad, I did, but I wasn't gifted with no such lay as you little folks be. Split me if I didn't feel the chills run up my back jist now over this here very hippo!" The day was exceptionally warm, the meadow lay fairly crisping under the glare of the sun. Since the Hippopotamus was dead it was now safe to sit on it, and Sandy was sprawled on the rock, his sleeves rolled up, showing the tattooing to its best advantage. "No, I couldn't shape no course 'long side of you, when I was little. Well, where is the next v'yage?"

Vivian had been staring in admiration of his decoration for the last minute, and now at his question she was off like a dart with Pester at her heels.

"You all go over to the cave," she called back over her shoulder as she ran, "it's cool

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there, and I'll be back in a jiffy. I've got a scrumptious plan."

"Oh, come down out of your airship, Vi," roared Mal through the trumpet of his hands. "It's too hot to do a new game."

"You just wait, you just wait," trailed Vi's voice, for already she was through the garden gate.

"Come on, let's go to the Cave. Silva and I have a lovely surprise for you," comforted Hippy, gathering herself up on her crutch. "There are two big bottles of lemonade cooling in the grotto. Minnie fixed it for us this morning."

"Good for you, little ladybird," cried Plug, "here Mal, give us a hand. Hippy's going to ride in the Queen's chair to the Cave. She's the girl for my money!"

And away they went, Hippy riding in state with an arm about each boy's neck, Silva bearing the little crutch, while Sandy, with Rog pick-a-back, brought up the rear.

The Cave, all green and moist and shady, seemed like fairyland after the palpitating heat of the meadow, and here Vi found them

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sipping lemonade from a motley array of cracked and chipped cups those two thrifty little housekeepers, Hippy and Silva, kept tucked away for just such social occasions.

"Your lemo is still cooling in the grotto," piped Rog, the minute Vi's flying feet were heard, and surely she needed it, poor child, she being crimson and breathless from running in the sun.

"Just you wait and see what I have got," she gasped, and out of her pocket she brought first a bottle of black drawing-ink, another of red, a ball of bluing, and a paper of needles.

"Holy smoke!" ejaculated Mal. "What are we going to do—start a store?"

"Sandy," she panted, fanning herself, while Silva poured out the lemonade. "Sandy . . . is . . . going . . . to . . . to tattoo us."

"Oh!—oh!—oh!" cried everybody, wild with delight.

"You are the stuff, Vi," proclaimed Mal, swelling with brotherly pride, "I never once thought of that, and of course it is just what

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we need, now that we are going to turn the *Furious Rover* into a freebooter. Did we tell you, Sandy, that Minnie is going to make us a Jolly Roger? We cut out the pattern of the skull and crossbones last night, and mamma gave us some black stuff for the flag. Gee, we'll have her flying from the peak when the captain gets back. Wish he was back now."

"Oh, don't we!" shouted everybody.

"And won't he be surprised when he sees us?" pursued Vivian, now refreshed and beaming. "I am going to have a ship with all sails set tattooed on one arm, and an American flag floating across the other."

"I speak for the *Furious Rover* with his cutlass and pistol on my right," broke in Mal, "and a heart with a dagger through it on my left."

"Mine for a hemisphere map like Sandy's, and an anchor with a motto, 'Here's luck,'" crowed Plug.

"And I'm going to have a map, and a ship, and an anchor, and . . . and a

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lion," piped Rog, "and I guess I'll have a bird on my cheek."

"I'm just going to have a red rose on one hand and a lily on the other," put in Hippy.

"I . . . I think I'll just have a butterfly," mused Silva, just seeing a "monarch" teetering before the breeze.

"Huh . . . huh . . . you will, will you?" gasped Sandy, and then he laughed until he shook.

"Sure," assented Mal proudly, "and we won't be a bit afraid, even if it does hurt, for aren't we the Scowling Scoots, the crew of the *Furious Rover*?"

"Hurry up, please, Sandy," implored Vi. "I'll be first, because I'm oldest. I'm not afraid—put in lots of red and blue."

"No, I'm first," said Mal, baring his thin boyish arm, "I'm chief of the Scoots, and, besides, I'm afraid mamma wouldn't like you to do it, Vi. Better ask her."

"You've got a head-piece on your shoulders, my lad," declared Sandy. "Them is the first words of sense and nimble-wittedness I heard since we steered this course.

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Why here I'd be givin' dollars to gooseberries to get rid of these here ridic'lous things, and to think of puttin' 'em on there," and Sandy pointed to Hippy's slim hands still held out to him.

"Oh, Sandy, please," wailed Vi.

"Oh, pshaw, Sandy, you've got to," broke in Plug, who always fell in with Vi's plans.

"Why, Sandy," went on Vi, "mamma will soon get used to it; it won't show under our sleeves; you know we can't play pirates worth a cent without being tattooed, or savages either, and now that we are to have a Jolly Roger we could have such fun."

"I don't believe mamma would care if we would all have just lilies and roses and such things, Sandy," declared Hippy. "She mightn't like Rog to have a bird on his cheek, but I can go ask her."

"Say," said Sandy chuckling—he never could endure to disappoint Hippy—"I'll tip you the word, and you may lay to it, it will be just as shipshape and Bristol fashion as the regular go, and it'll scour off for Sunday School, which ain't no bad virtoo.

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One of you run and ask your ma, and if she passes the word, why, we'll pipe all hands and *paint* the ink on."

The boys and Vi rebelled a bit, since the distinction of going to Sunday School tattooed seemed far from unpleasant, but when Vi, who had volunteered to ask their mother, came scudding back to say that not on their lives was one needle prick to be allowed, but that Sandy would be trusted to do any decorating he would guarantee to come off in the bath, they thankfully accepted Sandy's offer, for half a loaf was considered infinitely better than no bread by the Scowling Scoots.

"Well, you *are* a fine-lookin' lot!" scolded Winnie, when, having displayed themselves to all the dwellers in Tillatoba Valley, they came skipping around to her back door to hear what she had to say. "You're enough to scare a horse!"

"Aren't we lovely," giggled Hippy, looking lovingly at the splotch of red and blue that stood for a rose on the back of her little hand, "this is really lots better than the

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other way, for it can be changed every week. Next time I'm going to have a new moon on the middle of my forehead and Vi is going to have a star on the end of her nose."

But when it was discovered that a bath brick and a brush were all that would remove Sandy's handiwork, and that even then a faint outline showed on the poor red rasped flesh, each mother put her foot down.

"That's just the way," grumbled disgusted Vi, as she diligently traced with a pencil the outline of the American flag on her arm. "If it has anything against looks, no difference how nice it is, everybody is down on it. Wish I'd been born a Hottentot."

CHAPTER XI

THE REACTION

THIS ain't going to last," remarked Bassbinder's Winnie, rattling the peas so fast a handful hopped out of the pan. "I'm just expecting most anything to happen."

"Goodness me!" laughed Minnie. "You scolded all the time they were so naughty, and now that they have took to being good as angels you are all the time prophesying evil. You can't say one of them has ever been downright bad."

The twins were sitting on Bassbinder's back porch. All Tillatoba Valley was sizzling in the heat. Out in the apple-tree, by the well, a cicada shrilled fit to split one's ears, and now and then across the meadow came the sound of shouts and distant cheering.

"Everybody's *a-doing* for 'em," grumbled Winnie. "That cave is enough . . ."

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"They dug it themselves," threw in Minnie.

" . . . without any ship," went on Winnie, "and to call it *Furious Rover*, and there it is standing still as if it had growed fast, and whoever heard of a ship in a tree anyway?"

"Well, you have heard of one now, ain't you? And you can't say it has spoiled 'em, since you are complaining now of their goodness," laughed Minnie. "Just hear the dear things cheering! Wonder what they are at?"

"I'll just bet it is some mischief—you'll see! I don't believe our young ones would be half so crazy if it wasn't for your Helter Skelters. It's ridiculous for a big girl like Vi to be playing like a boy, and you are all spoiling Hippy to death on account of her crutch."

"I'm going home," retorted Minnie, slipping her crocheting into her pocket. "I'll come back when you are over your spell. Bye-bye, but don't bite your own nose off, twinie," and away she ran,

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leaving Winnie alone to mutter over her work:

“Just you wait! Just you wait!”

“Rah, rah, rah!” faint and far trailed the sound of cheering.

But, after all, Winnie was not so far wrong. The children had been very, very good, but they were growing restive waiting for the captain to come home. Not that Vivian when she first made her plan had the slightest idea of doing anything but surprising them all. She had thrilled to ecstasy as she read an article on bull-fighting in a magazine over at Aunt Kitty's—it was so picturesque—they could play it in the meadow, with the rocks for bulls. But that was at the very first of the planning, before she had been stealing away to the attic getting things ready, and before the artistic possibilities of the game had taken hold of her. Indeed, in the beginning, she had meant to ask her mother the best things to use in making pigtails and how to make a cocked-hat—for nothing was ever too small in her children's life to interest Mrs. Helter, no

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self-sacrifice too great for them; but as Vi worked and planned she found herself more and more averse to taking her mother into her confidence.

“There is no use bothering her,” she said to herself, as she sewed the plaited black cloth pigtail to the newspaper cocked-hat and compared it with the picture in the magazine, “poor little mamma has so much to do.”

She had finished the mantillas she had been cutting out for Hippy and Silva, and was trying one on before the cracked old mirror that hung on the wall—she had tucked an old red artificial rose Spanish-wise over her ear, like the girl in the picture—when it suddenly seemed to her she had made a discovery.

“My goodness me!” she gasped, addressing the slim little maid who looked out at her from under the black mosquito-netting scarf. “I believe you are getting pretty!” Now Vivian had never given a thought to her beauty, nor plainness, in all her fifteen years. She had been too busy living, and

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playing, and planning plays, and now she stared long and inquisitively at the exquisite little face, with its creamy complexion, its faint rose cheeks, its scarlet lips, its large dark eyes, and the soft dark hair that framed it. "No, you are too black," she said at last to the girl in the glass. "Not a bit fair like Hippy and Silva, and you are too awfully thin, and your forehead is too low, and your nose turns up. No, you're ugly. I just thought you were pretty at first glimpse. Now where is that petticoat?" And away she darted to the other end of the attic to throw open the old chest, and to "stir in its inwards, haul up from the bottom, and never put anything back," which was, according to Minnie, Vivian's usual method of house-keeping.

At last the old canvas telescope-bag, filled to bursting, was strapped and waiting, then softly, so softly, very different from the way she usually clattered down the stairs, Vivian descended, telescope in one hand, her proposed pike in the other, softly, softly, along the hall and out of the front door.

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"Vi, dear," called her mother.

"Yes, presently, mamma," answered Vivian, her naughty heart going hippety-hop. "I'm going down to the cave."

"Very well, only take good care of Hippy and Roger." But Vivian was around the house and down the garden path singing at the top of her voice. There is nothing like song to drown one's conscience, if one only sings loud enough, Vi well knew, but it wasn't a matter of conscience long, for the spirit of play had seized her. In fancy she was already Spanish, she was a matador . . . no, a picador . . . oh, if Plug had only gotten Deacon.

"*Pur-r-r-t!*" she shrilled, as she banged the garden gate after her and darted across the meadow. "*Pur-r-r-t!*"

"*Pur-r-r-t!*" came the answer, and from around the corner of Treasure Rock poured the Scowling Scoots—Mal, Hippy, Silva, Rog, and, yes, there was Plug, leading prancing Deacon, while Pester barked about him wildly, but kept well out of the reach of his heels.

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"Oh, glory!" panted Vi, dropping the telescope and sitting down on it. "Wait a minute until I get my breath, and I'll tell you. Did you boys do all I told you to?"

"Of course we did," replied Mal. "We drove Cherry and Blossom and Mooley down to the west pasture instead of the east."

"I asked pa if I might use Deacon," broke in Plug, "and I hooked Winnie's old Eton jacket—she don't wear it any more—and here is the red tablecloth."

"And here are the swords," and Mal held out two lath blades, "and say, Vi, Martin has put Iris and Bomba in the west pasture, too, to-day, so all the cows are there."

"Oh, goody! That makes just two more," cried Vi. "Now the next thing is to get ourselves to the pasture, and we will go the back way, because—well, because your mother might see us, Plug, and she would never let us have Deacon, even if your pa did say so." Which was quite true, for in spite of all arguments and the fact that Deacon got more skittish every day, Mrs.

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Bassbinder still insisted that ponies were too good for everyday use.

"But what are we going to do when we get there?" asked Hippy, jogging along. "Is it a new play or what?"

"It's a new play, and the loveliest you ever heard of," cried Vivian, all aglow. "Listen, did you ever hear of a bull-fight?" And she launched into such a vivid description of the bull-ring, of matadors in silk and gold with cocked hats and tiny pigtails, of banderilleros with crimson cloaks, of picadors on horseback with pikes, of the king and queen and cheering people, of colour and music, and excitement, and joy, that even Silva caught the spirit—but not one word did Vivian tell of the cruelty.

"Oh, gee," cried Rog, stopping to stand on his head, "this is the best game we ever had!"

CHAPTER XII

THE FULL-FIGHT

GUP-gip-gip-zig-zig-zee-e-e-e," jiggled the grasshoppers, pattering like rain among the dry meadow grass as they leaped to safety from the on-coming march of the Scowling Scoots. First came Mal, lugging the old canvas telescope, with Plug leading Deacon. Next Vivian, brandishing the pike, with Silva, and Rog, and Pester, while far behind hopped Hippy.

"We are not going to hurt anything, are we, Vi?" Hippy cried after them once, as Vivian pressed forward, lunging with her spear—a window brush handle whittled to a point—talking loudly of *pases altos* and *cambiados* and the *chef de quadrille*, her Spanish having a strong Tillatoba accent. "I won't play if we are going to hurt anything."

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“Why, of course not, silly,” called back Vi. “It isn’t going to hurt the cows any to trot around a little, and Martin says Deacon’s being ruined for want of exercise. We’ll just pretend to stick the cows. At first I thought we would have the rocks for bulls; but live cows are so much more exciting. Just you wait until you see what I’ve got in the telescope.”

Now the west pasture was seldom used, because the grass was neither so thick, nor lush, as that of the east through which ran Pitter-Patter Brook, but it was entirely out of sight from the house or road, a large level field enclosed by a “stake and rider” fence, that was embowered in woodbine and bitter-sweet. Just by the bars grew a big elm, and it was here Vi installed Hippy, who was to take the part of the Royal Family, and Silva, who was to impersonate the whole enthusiastic populace.

“You can both sit on the top rail; it’s nice and broad. You’ll have to hold Pester fast between you. Mal, you and Plug lift Hippy up,” she ordered, tugging at the

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buckles of the telescope. "Here we are! Aren't these beautiful mantillas? Silva, for goodness sake, take your bonnet off. You can't wear a mantilla over a sunbonnet. You'll have to wear the mantilla, even if you are both men and women. Just try to think how you would cheer if you were a whole kingdom. Now here are the red roses I found in a box. You can't be Spanish without a rose over your ear. There, hold still. Now don't they look scrumptious?"

"Jawsy!" gasped Mal, and then, to Vivian's disgust, both he and Plug laughed, but Hippy and Silva didn't care, and sat there on the top rail with the dilapidated roses and mosquito-netting mantillas tagging about their faces as proud as peacocks, with Pester snuggled between them.

"Now here is the red petticoat—that's for Mal to fasten to one of his swords, to flourish while he kills the bull with the other, he's to be the matador. The red tablecloth is for you, Pluggy; you're a toreador, you know, and you must drag the tablecloth gracefully by the corners—this way—to en-

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rage the bull." Away Vi skipped to drag the tablecloth before serene old Cherry, who rolled her mild brown eyes and went on nipping clover.

"Old stupid!" scowled Vi, "you don't know enough to be mad?"

"What'll *I* be?" asked Rog, hopping up and down in his excitement.

"Now just wait a minute," said Vi diplomatically—she expected trouble with Rog. "Now here are our hats—Plug's—and Mal's cocked, with these cunning little pig-tails sewed on them. Oh, yes, here's the brush; I must brush your hair right out over your ears—bull-fighters always wear theirs that way. You wear Winnie's Eton, Plug, over your shirt. There, that's jolly! And Mal, here is Minnie's; I trimmed it with red fringe and gilt paper to make it gay. Now take your swords—oh, you do look fine!"

"You do! you do!" cried the little girls from the fence, as the two boys strutted proudly up and down.

"What am *I* going to be, Vi?" begged

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Rog, hopping harder. "What am *I* going to be?"

"Just a minute, Roggy—now I am going to wear this broad-brimmed old hat of mine, and my red bolero . . ."

"Oh—oh—oh, did mamma say you could take it?" cried Hippy in surprise, as Vi slid into her best jacket.

"I'm not going to hurt it a mite," Vi evaded. "And now I'll take the pike."

"What am *I* going to be? What am *I* going to be?" clamoured Rog.

"Why, a chulo, Roggy dear, a brave, lovely chulo. See, here's your little rake and your little grey cap," purred Vi.

"What do I do—rake the bull?" asked Rog, all eagerness, clapping on the cap and seizing the rake.

"No—o—o," admitted Vi, "you rake the sand over the blood, when we've killed the bull," then she hurried on, "and I'll ride Deacon."

Not until that moment had they suspected her.

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"Oh, go chase yourself," roared Mal, "do you want to get your neck broken?"

"You must think you're the whole cheese—I got Deacon," threw in Plug.

"I *won't* rake. I *won't* rake," yelled Rog.

"Now, there!" cried Vi, flinging herself down on the ground in despair. "I got it all up. I did all the work, and now you won't play fair. The pony isn't yours anyway, Plug Bassbinder—it's Silva's. Mayn't I ride Deacon, Silva?"

But the people shook her head.

"Not if Plug wants to," for Silva was a loyal sister.

"I *won't* rake. I *won't* do chores, nor be a chore-o!" clamoured Rog. "I could drag the tablecloth as good as Plug, and I could be the people—Silva can't cheer worth a cent—or I could wave the petticoat, but I *won't* be a chore-o, and just rake old blood, so I won't!"

"And you're not going to break yourself, Vi, while I am here," put in Mal. "I don't care what I am, but you never in your life

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were on a horse, and Deacon is as skittish as a bumblebee. You know mamma wouldn't let you."

All this time Vi was buried in thought with her face in her hands. "Well," she said at last, "Rog could be a banderillero. The reason I didn't say so at first was because he will have to stick darts into the bulls."

"Then I won't play," cried the Royal Family. "I won't play if you stick things into Cherry."

"Oh, Hippy, be still," retorted exasperated Vivian. "Nobody is going to stick things; didn't I just say so? But there are some burrs by the fence and I can pin some of the red tassels from Mal's fringe on them. That's it, Rog," and once again she was on her feet all enthusiasm. "You'll be a banderillero, that's just grand. You see you hold a dart in each hand, and you bow low to the Royal Family like this, and then to the people, and just as the bull rushes at you you stick in the burrs," and she ran to try it, but, alas! the burr darts wouldn't stick in the

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cows' sleek coats, only in old Mooley's curly top-knot, where her "horns didn't grow." "Oh, we'll use Mooley for that part. I guess we'll have to take turns raking, or we can just pretend and order the chulo around. Now I am going to be a picador, just for once, and show you how."

"Not on Deacon," said Mal, with the set of his square jaw, for Deacon was restive and showed the whites of his eyes in the midst of their hullabaloo in a manner most fearful to see.

"Oh, let her once," broke in Plug, a little ashamed of his first outbreak, for Plug wasn't selfish. "I'd rather play turn about."

"Well, you and I can," agreed Mal, "but if Vi'd get hurt mamma'd blame me, and she just can't—that's flat."

"Oh, you old granny-grump," half sobbed Vi. "I just wish I were a boy, and I'd thump you. Well, anyway, I *will* be a picador, and you can't stop me—I'll ride Blossom. I suppose I can do that, old spoilsport."

So at it they went, first picador mounted

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on a white cow, second astride a piebald pony; matador brandishing a red flannel petticoat; banderillero so enterprising old Mooley soon looked as if she wore a bonnet.

“Rah—rah—rah!” shouted the People shrilly, not knowing Spanish for hurrah, while the Royal Family bowed and smiled and kissed her hand, and all went as fine as fiddles—at first, that is. Then faster and more furious waxed the fun, picadors and matador and little banderillero waved, and brandished, and shouted, and shrieked. Then Cherry, poked too energetically with a pike, lifted up her mild head and started off on a gentle lope—then old Mooley joined her.

“At ’em, lads!” yelled Plug, plunging forward on Deacon.

“Go it, boots, go it!” roared Mal.

“After ’em! Let not a bull escape,” shrieked Vi.

“Oh, Vi, you *will* hurt them! Oh, please, Plug, don’t,” shrieked the Royal Family, as Cherry and Mooley, now really frightened, thundered by.

“Oh, Hippy, if you are a ’fraid cat, cover

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up your face, and pretend you are an American lady," called back Vi, as astonished Blossom bore her with awkward, aimless rushes about the field.

"I'm not a 'fraid cat," cried Hippy indignantly. "I'm never afraid a bit, but you'll hurt the cow. Oh, please stop, everybody!"

But no one heeded.

All this time Iris and Bomba, the two beautiful little Jersey cows that were the pride of Redroof, had been cropping clover at the other end of the field, paying no attention to the bull-fight; but now Pester, who had only been held by main force, gave one awful lunge, and the little girls were almost pitched from their high seat—then he was gone.

"Bow-wow-wow!" he barked, as he tore over the field and nip-nip-nip he made at Bomba—then away the two Jerseys went galloping together, right into the thickest of the fight.

"Bow-wow-wow!" yapped Pester, and up he dashed at Deacon's nose. That insult

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was more than Deacon could bear, and out went his heels.

“Whoa, Deacon, whoa!” shouted Plug too late.

“Bow-wow!” raged Pester—then Deacon remembered an old trick of his on the plains; down went his slender nose between his knees, whirl went his lithe little body, out flew his nimble heels—*thud!* The kick struck square and cruelly upon Bomba’s sleek brown shoulder!

“Oh! oh! oh!” shrieked the little girls, “Deacon’s killed Bomba! Deacon’s killed Bomba!”

For Bomba reeled and sank to her knees; but she was up in a moment with a pitiful “moo,” as she struggled to her feet, then she limped painfully away, and over the pasture settled an awful silence.

CHAPTER XIII

CONSEQUENCES

THE soft summer rain was beating upon the thirsty earth. There was the breath of the refreshed out-of-doors, a fragrance of growing things, a sweet wet tang to the breeze that swept through the open window to welcome Hippy to a new day. Yet she opened her eyes with a sob, and started up on her elbow in affright. Something was different from the usual happy morning awakening; something was wrong. Then, as the memory of the scene of yesterday in the west pasture swept over her, Hippy lay back to hide her head in the pillow.

The whole house had been black with their disgrace the night before. Never had their mother looked so indignant, so heartsick, as when they told her the whole story. Minnie, who loved them so much, had thrown her apron over her head and rushed out sobbing:

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“And I was a-sayin’ that very whip-stitch to Win they’d never done a single thing downright bad, and there they were cheering their bull-fight that blessed minute! Oh, dear me!”

Plug and Silva had been sent supperless to bed, and there wasn’t a little Helter who didn’t envy them. To be punished and feel rebellious is a great comfort to a naughty heart; but to be forgiven, and yet know that your misdeeds lie heavy upon the one who forgives—oh, that is misery.

The shadowy evergreens had never looked eerie, the call of the whippoorwill had never been desolate, until that night. Never had a sound so smote them as the patter of Prince’s feet when he trotted past, for by Martin sat the captain, home at last, and they—a sob caught their wretched hearts.

Before going upstairs for the night they had followed their mother into the parlour, and there, with their father’s portrait looking down upon them, she had talked to them as she never had in their life. They usually came before the picture upon birthdays and

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at Christmas, and all the merry, happy, innocent times, to put flowers in the little vase that always stood ready. But to-night there were no flowers, only the quiet, calm gaze that seemed to follow them so tenderly. Their mother had looked so little, and frail, and childish, in her white gown, and her face was so pathetic, as she told them of how their father had hated cruelty more than any other sin.

Then she kissed them all and they filed up to bed, looking back at her as she stood in the hall with her candle. But they knew, as they heard the door close, she had gone back to the picture for comfort and counsel, and they had in their minds a vision of that little figure praying there and for them.

Hippy remembered, too, that she had wakened in the night and heard Vivian's low sobbing—Vivian had tried to take all the blame on herself, even when Martin raved at them. But now it was another day.

Hippy slipped out of bed, dressed herself, and then, wary of every movement, swung herself down the stairs. The old hall clock

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showed it was after six. Hippy turned the big brass key, softly opened the door, and let herself out into the rain. The world was very beautiful under the shower that had now settled into a patter so gentle it hardly made the clovers tremble. In the sky overhead the fleecy clouds were rolling themselves back as for a new scene. The silvery blue, new washed, smiled down on the green earth.

In spite of herself Hippy was cheered. There was much comfort in the air she drank in so gladly, as she hippety-hopped steadily out of the front gate, straight down the road and in at the driveway to Redroof and the captain.

"Dis heah's too early fo' callin', chile," said Hulda crossly, as she opened the door and saw Hippy standing there. "But de cap'n is in de libe'y jest dat troubled, po' man."

Then all the courage Hippy had gathered on her walk seemed to ooze out of her fingertips.

But Hulda had already thrown open the

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door and announced her in a loud whisper. Then, as Hippy stood in the doorway, the captain turned slowly from his desk in his revolving chair and looked at her.

Hippy couldn't raise her eyes at first. Oh, if only—if only—but what was this the captain was saying in just the old kind way:

"Well, well, and here is my little ship-mate to see me so early in the morning. Now that is pleasant."

How the little drooping figure changed, even her crutch seemed to joyously leap forward to help her to his forgiving arms.

"Well, Hippy, my dear, how has the time gone with you?" and the captain folded her close.

"Oh, he doesn't know," thought Hippy. Martin hadn't told him at all, and she . . . must confess all their naughtiness! She went white from the very thought of it—to feel those strong, kind arms put her away . . . to hear that dear voice stern and cold after this welcome, to see those eyes that looked down upon her so tenderly grow full of reproof. Hippy lay quite still with her

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eyes shut, and then turning her face against his shoulder, so nothing was in view but her little pink ear, she said, and in spite of her fear her voice was quite steady:

“I guess . . . I guess, Captain Page, Martin didn’t tell you. We were very, very bad—so bad mother took us in to father’s portrait in the parlour. I came to tell you how it was my own self, for fear you would think our Vivian was worse than the rest—she wasn’t one bit. I . . . I was dreadful, I was the whole Royal Family, and bowed and kissed my hand like anything. Oh, I was awful! I see it now, since mother told us, but we—were just thinking of the fun, you see—but, oh, we didn’t any of us mean to hurt Bomba, nor any of the cows. We just meant to let them trot a little bit, and . . . and”—Hippy’s tears were coming now. It was so hard to talk into a woollen coat, it was so unsympathetic, and the captain sat so still,—“and,” she stumbled on, “if you will just please to forgive the rest, and, oh, please, not be hard on our Vi—I think she cried ’most all night—and mother and Mrs. Bassbinder

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said we all had to come and ask you to forgive us . . . but, oh, Captain Page, Silva can't . . . you know *she* can't! She went to bed without her supper, but she can't say she is sorry, she's too scared—it would most kill her—oh, please, can't I . . . ?”

“May you ask forgiveness for Silva? Indeed, you may,” the captain assured her, patting her softly as if she were a baby, and his voice was very kind as he went on. “Listen, dear, and don't cry any more. Martin told me all about this last night; but oh, child, I haven't it in my heart to be stern with anyone these days. I'm in deep trouble and very anxious, Hippy, and I will have no other sad hearts in Tillatoba, if I can prevent it. I felt very sure it all happened because you got to playing too hard, I couldn't imagine one of you being intentionally cruel. But I must talk to Vivian, dear heart; she is the eldest, and too old a girl to get the rest of you into mischief. One of you might have been badly hurt.”

“Oh, she didn't mean to be naughty,”

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begged Hippy, still tearful. "She's just the best sister and she's so sorry."

"Trust me, Hippy child. I love you all most dearly, I won't be hard on Vivian, and as for little Silva . . ."

But just then there was a sound of steps on the walk outside—there they came, matador, second picador, banderillero, and the people; but, alas! where was the first picador? There was no slim little bird-like figure among them, just the boys, with Silva tagging behind.

It was a hard interview for everyone, and though the captain shook them pleasantly by the hand, and forgave them freely, there was a sadness about it all.

"He's—awfully hurt with us," Mal gloomily remarked, as once more they tramped down the driveway, forgiven, but chastened.

"Oh, he's just the loveliest in the whole wide world," said Hippy, as she thumped soberly along with the rest. "I don't think it is all us, Mal. I think he's dreadful sorry to think we were so naughty, but he said he

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was in deep trouble, and oh, I think we ought to be good now."

To everybody's astonishment, at Hippy's words Silva suddenly turned and ran as fast as her feet could carry her back to Redroof. The door stood open and not one moment did Silva pause—she dared not—but straight up the hall she ran, into the library door, and up to the captain.

"I . . . I," she gasped, pale as a little flower, "I—am awfully sorry too. I was the people—I—I cheered—and oh—I'll never——"

"Bless you, child!" and in spite of his anxiety the merriment flashed back into his eyes. But the captain did not smile. Silva never knew what he said, nor how she got out of the house. Indeed, it was only the sight of Vivian's slim figure rushing up the steps and into Redroof that brought her to—but Silva Luna felt the comforting glow of forgiveness.

The captain turned once more from his desk when he heard Vivian's flying feet. If he had been surprised at not seeing her with

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the rest he had not said so; but now the eyes that rested upon her were stern.

“What—what did they tell you?” panted Vivian, clinging to the door knob with both hands and looking at him fiercely. “Did they say they had anything to do with it? I hid so they couldn’t find me. I didn’t want to come with them. I wanted you to hear all they had to say—but it’s not a word true, they just love me so they think it is. It was all my doing. I read about it. I made the things and never told mamma. I sneaked them out of the house. I coaxed the others to play. I wasn’t sorry when I found Bomba and Iris were in the field. I poked with the pike. Hippy begged and begged me not to hurt the cows and I called her a ’fraid cat. It was all I, and I ought to have all the punishment. It most killed me when mamma talked to us before father’s picture last night. The rest were little when he died. Why, Rog was a baby—but I remember him and mamma has talked most to me, and she trusted me and . . . and . . .”

“Yes, Vivian,” said the captain, “and

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now I would like to have you come here a moment. I have something I want to say to you."

It cost Vivian more effort than the captain realised to drag her reluctant self to the big chair in front of him.

"Vivian," he said gently, "as to the bullfight you are entirely forgiven. As I told Hippy, I am too deeply troubled myself to be hard on anyone, and I can see how you have suffered, child. But I quite agree with you that you are the most to blame. I love you all dearly, Vivian, everyone does; but my sister, your mother, and all of the rest, have seen you grow up, and they are used to your faults and failings, so what you really are is more easily seen by me, who come fresh to you. As you have no father, and I am fond of you, I am going to risk hurting you in the belief you will some day thank me for it. You are no longer a little child, Vivian. You are fifteen, and in a few years, years that will pass as days, you will be a grown woman. I heartily approve of your having been brought up to play out-of-doors

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with your brothers. It has made you strong and well, but to-day, you are the wildest, most unmanageable of them all, and you do not seem to care to improve. The time has come for you to stop and think. You are the eldest, and they love you, and look up to you, and follow you, not only the boys, but Hippy and Silva. I know you want them to grow up to be refined and gentle ladies like your mother."

"And Aunt Kitty . . ." whispered Vi with dry lips.

"Yes, Vivian, you all see and admire my sister's beautiful graciousness. That comes from the heart, child, but it must be cultivated, too. Every woman owes a great debt to the world. Most all of the beauty and sweetness and grace come to us through the women of the world, and when a woman is beautiful her responsibility is only that much greater. No vanity should blind her to what she owes God for the great gift of beauty—and that is what I wanted to say to you Vivian," and the captain put out his hand. "You are to be a beautiful woman,

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Vivian, and that very soon. Learn to live up to it. That is risky food, perhaps, for a young girl—but I believe in it. I want you to grow up strong, and self-reliant, and refined, and gentle. I forgive you, my dear, if there is anything to forgive, and I want to give you my true friendship for all our life—the friendship an old man may give to a young girl he wishes to see grow up to be a good and noble woman. Now that is all.”

To Vivian, as he talked, there had come the vision of a little dark face, a red rose tagging over one ear, as she had seen it in the old cracked mirror. A few moments later she stood before it once more, staring at the big-eyed face that looked out at her.

“Oh,” she sobbed, “I don’t want to be a woman at all. I don’t want to be beautiful—I just perfectly hate it—I want to be always just Vi Helter and have fun—but oh, I’ve got to, I’ve got to!”

CHAPTER XIV

DOCTOR JIMMIE

THE day of the forgiveness was passed in a quiet sail in the *Furious Rover*. In spite of the captain's kindness the Scoots were much subdued,—for, indeed, everyone did not feel as the captain did,—Martin still glared at them, and Bassbinder's Winnie said most uncomplimentary things. But the strangest and most unexpected outcome of their misbehaviour was that a new Vivian was among them, and no one knew what to make of her strange conduct.

The Scoots hadn't had a glimpse of her after Silva saw her enter Redroof, and not until noon did she appear, coming slowly down the garret stairs, in an old black skirt of her mother's and with her hair done up on the top of her head, and as more unmistakable evidence of her reform she wore an

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apron with a pocket, from which protruded the soiled scollop of a doily she had been embroidering since Christmas.

"Why, Vivian, dear!" exclaimed her mother, with a pang at her heart—mercy, how the child had grown! But the eyes Vi turned to her mother were so full of childish misery that Mrs. Helter took her in her arms and said: "What is it, dear?"

"Don't, mamma," whispered Vi. "I'm—I'm growing up, and I must be dignified, and—and stiff as a poker—and I can't, if you hug me like that."

"Oh, well," laughed Mrs. Helter, thinking it was just another of Vivian's plays, "you don't have to grow up all at once."

"'Years that pass as days,'" Vivian quoted the captain tragically; but as Minnie just then announced dinner her mother let her go. All through dinner Vi sat dignified and silent, accepting all attentions with much graciousness—she had been practising Aunt Kitty's smile before the old mirror—holding her cup with her little finger stuck out straight, a way she had much admired in

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her school teacher, and replying to all remarks with an exceedingly polite, "No mamma," "Yes, mamma."

"What's eatin' Vi?" burst out Mal at last in exasperation, happening to notice the stiff finger.

"Why, Mal!" exclaimed his mother, who waged a continual warfare against schoolboy slang; but her protest was as nothing to the sweet reproof that leaped into Vivian's eyes.

"Why, brother!" she said sadly, looking down at her plate.

"Aw, step off your skyscraper!" Mal exploded with disgust.

Indeed, the Scoots were deserving of much praise that they endured calmly all that she put upon them the rest of the day. If they had been in their usual good spirits they never could have tolerated it. She was so superior, so subduedly virtuous. She had consented kindly to accompany them upon the sail, though she snatched from the parlour table to carry with her the "Meditations of Marcus Aurelius," in a padded cover, and between turning its moralising

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pages, gravely doing a few stitches on the grimy doily, and correcting the manners and grammar of her fellow Scoots, she managed to survive the afternoon. Miserable?—by no means, for by this time Vivian was playing “grown up” with the same intensity she had the bull-fight—but she had the band simply “worn to a frazzle” by the time they scuttled in to supper.

The children were all safe in bed and Mrs. Helter was sitting alone on the front porch when Mrs. Gordon and the captain came over to call. They brought the good news that Bomba was proving less hurt than they had at first feared. But the captain had come particularly to tell the more joyful news that while he was in New York he had been with his old friend, the famous surgeon, Doctor Cuyler, and had had long talks with him about Hippy, and the result had been the doctor was coming down to see her, and if there was anyone who could help the dear child, the captain added, it was Doctor Jimmie.

Mrs. Helter took the news quietly, as she

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did everything, and she and Mrs. Gordon at once agreed that Hippy was to know nothing of it until Doctor Cuyler came; indeed, not until the very moment of the examination—"She lives too hard as it is," said Mrs. Gordon.

"Oh, dear," sighed the little mother, "one hardly knows what to do with such imaginative children. You never know what they will do next. Here's the dreadful bullfight just over, and now Vivian is off on another tack; she says she's growing up and has her hair on the top of her head and is wearing one of my long skirts. I thought I'd let it go to-day, but Mal came to supper in high dudgeon with her, and she had been correcting Plug's grammar, and everybody's manners, and they were all grumpy in consequence."

"Oh, well, don't trouble," laughed Mrs. Gordon. "She may be playing wings and a halo to-morrow—she's only giving range to her imagination."

Now the captain sat mute during this conversation. In fact he had never been

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more uncomfortable, for he wasn't half so sure he was right as he had been in the morning. Dear, dear, what would Mrs. Helter and Kitty say if they knew he had told the child she was to be beautiful?—one was safer on shipboard than meddling with things he knew nothing about. He was so conscience-smitten he was very glad when Mrs. Gordon arose to go.

"I don't know," mused Mrs. Gordon, as they walked up the drive in the moonlight, "if, after all, it were not best for Vivian to realise she is no longer a child, she is getting to be so lovely, and yet is such an impossible tomboy, someone ought to tame her a bit; but I always so dread 'brushing the fairy dust from girlhood's wings.' I never would dare to do it myself."

"Well, I did," blurted out the captain. "I guess it's a clear case of fools rushing in where angels fear to tread. But you'll help me out, Kitty—you must. It would break my heart if I had harmed the child."

Doctor Jimmie came in the middle of the

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month, and half a day after his arrival every Scowling Scoot was his devoted admirer. He was so handsome, so tall, so alert, and young in all his movements, so elegant in dress, that the children swelled with a sort of personal pride in him. And when the first morning he appeared in white duck, from his yachting cap to his immaculate shoes, and asked for a sail on the *Furious Rover*, a thrill went through Tillatoba Valley.

"Don't go without me," begged Rog, flying off to the house to wash his face and hands.

"Please excuse me, just one minute." Vi suffered many lapses in her endeavour to grow up all at once, so away *she* flew to come back so crisp and dainty in her fresh blue gingham frock the captain lifted his cap to her for the second time that morning. Hippy and Silva were always neat because they loved it, Plug because he had to be; but after all Doctor Jimmie seemed to take the greatest fancy to Mal, who only ran his fingers through his curly mop and announced himself ready.

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That was the jolliest sail the *Furious Rover* ever had, for the captain and Sandy outdid themselves in sea-yarns, and then somebody discovered Doctor Jimmie could sing—New York had discovered it years before—and now his baritone that had charmed so many audiences “went bowling over the rolling ocean” of jolly old sea-songs up there among the tree-tops as they sailed and sailed; but all the time Doctor Jimmie was singing of gales and flying spray, or “putting three shots in their lobster pots,” he never forgot for one moment what he had come for. It was his fine strong hands that swung Hippy aloft in the gig, it was he who sprang to help her when she needed it, his delicate fingers that slipped to her little fluttering pulse, when she grew too hilarious over the beautiful time they were having, and he who insisted she should swing, while he sang to her, in the hammock that Sandy had hung for her between the masts.

But he never knew how she was watching him, nor how she was drinking in every word, every tone, and wondering, wonder-

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ing. Indeed, they were parting at the orchard gate when he felt a little tug at his sleeve and bent his head to hear what she had to say.

“Doctor Cuyler,” she began.

“Doctor Jimmie, dear, all my little friends call me so, and you must, too, Hippy,” he said, looking at her, smiling.

“Well, Doctor Jimmie, well . . . will you please come down to Treasure Cave right after dinner, and not tell a single soul—not even my captain.” Hippy hesitated. “I want to ask you something my very own self.”

“Very well, little lady,” laughed the doctor. “The cave shall be our first trysting place, but not the last, for, I see, you and I are to be sweethearts.”

“Can you have more than one sweetheart?” asked Hippy innocently.

“Oh, I assure you, I have no other,” bantered Doctor Jimmie.

“But I have,” said Hippy firmly. “The captain is my best and first friend after mamma, but I want to see you on business,”

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she went on, lifting her earnest eyes to his, "oh, such important business, and oh, it's something I . . . I couldn't bear to have anyone laugh about."

The doctor stood looking after her a moment, not ashamed of the mist in his eyes, and as he joined the captain and Mrs. Gordon on the veranda his first words were:

"Jack, I don't wonder you and Kitty love that child, and if God has given any skill to these hands of mine it shall all be at Hippy's service."

Doctor Jimmie was already seated in Treasure Cave when Hippy appeared. Her face was so pale and grave she hardly seemed to be the same laughing, gay little thing he had watched all through the morning. In her hands she carried the clay pig.

Gravely Doctor Jimmie listened, as she explained that, save as she would, she had managed to get only seventy-seven cents since the Hindoo widow had made her a bankrupt. "But, oh," she said, shaking the pennies out of the clay pig into her apron, "I'll save and save all my life, and when I

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can walk like other little girls I can earn money faster. I . . . I believe in you, Doctor Jimmie . . . I just know you can cure me. Of course, I can't tell mamma and worry her yet, and we're very poor; but I can dig for the treasure, and dig, and dig, and when I get big I'll teach school, and write books, and sing in the choir, and work button-holes nights—oh, I'll make just lots and lots of money, and I'll give you every cent, if you'll only fix my bad knee—and you needn't be afraid I'll cry, if it hurts—I'll just laugh, and laugh.”

“My child,” said Doctor Jimmie, dropping the pennies back one by one into Hippy's savings bank, “if such a thing can be I will cure that little leg. I will— but I want no money, Hippy, just your belief—that can help me a great deal in curing you. To-morrow I will examine it, and if it can be helped you shall come to me in New York this fall, and we will do our best, you and I, to cure you so the little crutch can be laid away, forever.”

“Can . . . can mamma go with me?”

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faltered Hippy, blinking for a moment, as if she had suddenly seen a great light; but then, not waiting for an answer, she added, "but, of course, I can go alone to you, and I'll believe, and I'll do just as you tell me to do, and I'll be brave, Doctor Jimmie, I will."

"I don't for one moment doubt that, Hippy," said the doctor, and hand to hand they went back through the quiet meadow.

CHAPTER XV

THE STORM

“‘I’m a bold buccaneer, and my name is Red Bob;
I take on Pirate work by the job ’”

sang Vivian at the top of her voice.

“‘Thunder and blood!’”

roared out the boys in an uproarious refrain.

“Silva and I just perfectly hate that song,” broke in Hippy.

But how could a band of buccaneer ruffians, turbanded and sashed with red, girt with cutlasses and pistols—wooden—from whose ears hung huge rings—of gilt paper—whose moustaches—of charcoal—turned up fiercely, and whose eyes leered most villainously, be expected to listen to the plaintive cries of prisoners in chains? On went the song:

“‘I’m a bold buccaneer of the cross-boned breed,
And the rakish craft—I am, indeed—
Thunder and blood!’”

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All day the Jolly Roger had floated from the masthead, and with every sail set the *Furious Rover* had ploughed the tree-top main. She had captured a prize somewhere off the Dry Tortugas, and there had been much lopping off of heads, walking the plank, and swinging from the yardarm. Only two women—ladies of high degree, with helpless infants in their arms—had escaped death, and they, poor things, now sat high on the poop loaded with cruel paper chains and bitterly bemoaning their fate.

But the truth was their imagination was running dry and they were all a bit tired of it, though Mal still roared his orders through a paper trumpet.

“Down stays’ls.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” sang out the crew.

“Ay, ay, sir,” squawked the Admiral from his cage in the bow.

“Jib tops’l halyards.”

“Ay, ay, sir.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” echoed the parrot.

“Let the stays’ls be.”

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"Ay, ay, sir."

"Steady as she goes."

"Ay, ay, sir."

If Mal's orders were mixed the crew didn't know it, any more than the Admiral, who squawked out orders to himself all day. But Vi, tired of it all, had ceased to obey commands and stood sweeping the horizon with the old brass spy-glass in the hope of discovering new booty.

"Say," she broke out suddenly, "the wild raspberries are ripe over in the west meadow. Let's go over to gather a whole lot for supper."

"Did you see them through the spy-glass?" chuckled Mal.

"Smarty," scorned Vi, "I saw them this morning when I drove the cows to pasture for lazy you—but, say, let's."

"All right," agreed Mal, "if the rest want to, only everybody will have to help take in sail. It looks sort of dusky over there in the west. Sandy says a blow with the sails set would take the sticks out of her in a jiffy."

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"Hippy and Silva can't go," put in Plug, busy with the sails. "Rog has been fooling with the davits and he's got the blocks and tackle out of order so we can't lower the gig. But we'll stop and tell Sandy, he's helping Martin with the hay, and he'll come right over and fix it."

"I don't believe you'd better go, anyway, Hippy," advised Vi, bringing down the Jolly Roger, "it's awfully hot, and you know Doctor Jimmie said you must be careful."

"Oh, Silva and I don't want to go, we're going to be busy," answered Hippy, hopping into the cabin for her work-basket. So down the ladder swarmed the pirates, leaving the *Furious Rover*, a moment ago the scene of bloodshed and terror, drowsing away in the tree-top, to the time of the lullaby Silva was crooning to Cordelia.

Doctor Jimmie had come and gone, leaving behind him hopeful, but anxious hearts. Hippy might be cured, that was all he could promise so far. Her out-door life, her courage and cheerfulness were all greatly in her

THE STORM

favor, but the shock of the operation was to be feared with such a delicate constitution. In the autumn when he returned from Europe, she was to be sent to a hospital in New York, where he would operate on her knee. Meanwhile she was to be attended as carefully and lovingly, he laughingly told them, as a little bird in a cage.

“Remember,” he had said to the children, “remember, I’ll leave her in your care, and I expect you to send her to me in the best condition possible. There must be no great excitement these next few weeks, no worry, no fright for Hippy, I’ll leave her in trust for everyone.”

And they had really taken most beautiful care of her. At first, indeed, she had found it almost embarrassing to have so many hands and feet holding themselves in readiness to wait upon her, but now it had settled into a pleasant loving service that was very sweet to her grateful little heart.

For a time after the pirates had so suddenly turned into berry-pickers, the little girls sat lost to the world, busily making

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hats for Cordelia and Jessica out of the bright bits of silk Aunt Kitty had given them the day before. It was only when they discovered they were hungry and Hippy had brought the lunch from the little galley—Aunt Chat, “the bumboat,” still brought the ship supplies—that Silva noticed how the duskiness in the west had settled into a bank of clouds with a queer greenish tinge at the top. But when she called Hippy to look they decided it wasn’t anything at all to worry about, unless it should rain the next day and spoil their Treasure Cave picnic.

“Isn’t Aunt Chat the best?” Hippy went on, busy with her dearly loved duties—for Hippy was a little housewife to her fingertips. “There are cookies in the basket, and peaches, and bread and butter, and pickled beets in a glass—I guess the Scoots would have stayed if they had thought about it—oh, and here’s some little cottage cheese balls, too, and——” a low mutter interrupted her, a sullen rumble that slowly muffled itself into silence.

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“What was that?” asked Silva. “It sounded over toward the meadow.”

Hippy peeped out of the galley, and then stood looking silently away across the tree-tops at the bank of clouds, now almost black at the bottom, but rolling itself upward in swathes, like a great grey-green scarf, a dull, dingy veil, blowing angrily up the sky, and spreading around the horizon, while just above the ship it streamed in torn rags and steamy scuds that flew away faster and faster.

“Isn’t it queer and still?” asked Silva, as Hippy picked up the spy-glass and looked toward the hay field. But the men and the hay wagons were gone, and Hippy remembered she had heard the captain say they would put the hay in the lower barn, and that was quite out of sight behind the hill. She could see none of the children in the field. Indeed, she could not see a living soul, as she swept the whole scene. There was Redroof just beyond the orchard, and home over the wall, and Bassbinder’s chimneys showing between the elms at the gate;

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but there was none to hear them call. It was so still the leaves about the ship had hushed their whispering. The only sound was the long, low rumble, that came again and again. Mother, the old weather-wise cat, who had been curled up on deck, awoke, yawned, stretched herself, and at once sprang over the side to a convenient limb, and so, by her favourite way, descended the tree to the ground.

“Here, Mother, Kitty, Kitty,. Kitty!” coaxed Silva; but Mother, never glancing back, trotted off toward the house.

Now Hippy knew that, afraid as Silva was of almost everything, of nothing did she stand in such deadly fear as a storm, and so she hadn’t answered Silva’s question, not the first, nor the second. She hopped to the gig; but, no, Plug was right, it would not lower. The ship’s ladder was swinging—oh, if she only had two good feet like Silva!

“Silva,” she said, “don’t you think you could go down the ladder, just once? Just think how Vi goes up and down every day

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—and I'd love to, if it wasn't for my crutch."

"Down the ladder—why?" gasped Silva. "Why should I go down? Won't Sandy come soon and fix the gig? Plug said they'd stop and tell him."

"I know, but . . . but . . . I guess they must have forgotten it, the hay wagons are gone."

"Oh, well, I'd just as soon play a while longer, Hippy. Minnie'll ring the bell when supper is ready."

"Why, Silva . . . " but before Hippy could go on a zigzag streak slashed the purple cloud from top to bottom and savage and angry thunder bellowed right over their heads.

"Oh!" shrieked Silva, clapping her hands over her ears and growing deadly pale. "It's thunder, Hippy, it's thunder!"

"Avast, matey, avast!" squawked the Admiral, fluttering to the top of his cage.

"Of course it's thunder, and that's the reason I wanted you to go down the ladder, Silva," begged Hippy, pulling down her

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hands, "listen, it is going to storm awfully and it's very dangerous up here—the *Furious Rover* may blow down, we can't tell. They've forgotten to tell Sandy, and nobody but we children know that the gig is out of order, and everyone will think we are with the rest and that they will take care of us."

"Rog . . . Rog was a very bad boy," wailed Silva, her breath coming in gasps.

"Well, suppose he was, that won't help us now," scolded exasperated Hippy. "There's the ladder and you have two good feet, and all you've got to do is to go down and run to Redroof and tell the captain to come and get me. You will be safe in a minute, and if I am not afraid to stay alone up here with the storm coming, you ought not to be afraid to go down."

"I . . . I couldn't," and Silva backed away, as if she were afraid Hippy would force her over the side. "I'm afraid to go down and I'm afraid to stay here! Oh, oh, oh!" For now the wind had swept down upon them. The trees on the hill

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caught it first—they bent, they twisted, they writhed. Now it was over the orchard, and the masts and rigging of the *Furious Rover* creaked and whistled. The boughs scraped and thrashed against her side while the lightning tore the sky and the thunder muffled the surrounding tumult with one frightful crash after another.

“Avast, matey, avast!” squalled the Admiral. Hippy lifted his big cage and laboriously hopped to the cabin. Back to the ladder she panted. It was no longer a question of Silva going down that way; Hippy knew that at once, for the wind was now thrashing it back and forth, threatening at every moment to wrench it from its fastenings.

“Come to the cabin, Hippy, come,” begged Silva, holding her ears and her eyes tight shut.

“Silva,” screamed Hippy, her slim little body twisting in the wind. “We must pull up the jack-ladder. We *must*, or it will go, and may be they couldn’t get us down tonight. We *must*, I tell you!”

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"I . . . I couldn't. I can't . . . I can't," called back Silva over the voice of the thunder. "I'm afraid."

"Oh, oh!" sobbed Hippy in sudden despair, as she balanced herself on her crutch and tried to pull the ladder up with both hands. It would not come, but it gave a little. If only she could stand. The wind had died down for a moment, there was a lull, but it was to be only for a moment; one could almost see the storm gathering itself together and crouching to spring. But there was this moment! Oh, for a little help! And then it was as if a sudden fury took possession of Hippy.

"Silva! Silva Luna!" she shrieked, "if you don't come and help me, I'll . . . I'll throw my crutch at you, like Long John Silver. *Do . . . you . . . hear . . . me!*"

Yes, Silva heard and saw, too, a burning contempt in gentle little Hippy's blazing, indignant eyes.

"I'm . . . afraid," she started to wail, but Hippy balanced her crutch.

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"You . . . *coward!*" she said through her set teeth, "you *villy-viley sneak!*"

Silva waited for no more.

"Don't—Hippy, don't—look at me like that," she begged. "I'll help! I'll help!"

"Don't give up the ship!" squalled the Admiral from the cabin. "Heave ho, matey, heave ho! Ay, ay, sir, ay, ay!"

A moment later the ship's ladder lay safe on deck, and the storm raged on to its height, rolling and crashing, and bellowing and booming, until the rain came down in a deluge. In the wee cabin Hippy and Silva in the meantime huddled while the ship rocked and reeled, threatening to follow the fate of many a gallant ship of the sea by dashing to total wreck.

"Oh, oh," sobbed Silva, cowered in a dripping corner. "I'll be dead when they find me, clear dead! It's awful to be in a ship in a storm. Oh . . . and you called me awful things, Hippy Helter, and . . . and you were going to hit me."

But Hippy lay back white and faint and didn't say a word. Outside the rain dashed,

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the thunder crashed and the twisting boughs rasped angrily against the hull; inside all was quiet now, only the Admiral crouched in the bottom of his cage, muttering softly his "heave ho, heave." Presently a new and an awful fear came into Silva's heart, a fear so great even the storm was forgotten, a fear that made her creep on her hands and knees to look into Hippy's face as it lay on the little red pillow.

Silva never knew how she did it—no one ever understood it. It was well the wind had worn itself out. The flashes, too, were dimming, and the thunder seemed but an echo of itself, as it rumbled and rumbled away into silence; the rain no longer dashed, but gave way and poured down as if it would empty the sky. Round by round Silva let down the jack-ladder, then she leaned far out over the rail and shook it. It hung, all clear, and with a gasping sigh she crept over the side. The rain pelted her little blonde head, it beat her white up-turned face, but step by step she let herself down.

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“Hippy . . . Hippy!” she panted, rushing into Aunt Chat’s kitchen.

“Fo’ de Lo’d’s sake!” screamed Aunt Chat, “what’s de matter? Yo’s wet as a drowned hen, chil’.”

“Hippy! . . . Hippy!” moaned Silva, safe on Aunt Chat’s breast. “She’s up in the ship all alone, and the gig won’t lower, and . . . and . . . she’s dead!”

CHAPTER XVI

WHAT HIPPY SAW IN THE NIGHT

BUT Hippy wasn't dead—she had only fainted from over-exertion and fright. It had been an anxious time, that night after the storm in Tillatoba Valley. The Scowling Scoots were subdued with remorse. They had forgotten all about the gig, until the storm broke over their heads and they had taken shelter in the old sheep-shed, but even there they had comforted themselves by assuring one another that, “of course, the girls had called somebody,” “of course, the captain had gotten them down,” and “of course, Silva Luna would go down the ladder fast enough when she heard a thunder clap,” this last from Plug, though as he said it his heart misgave him.

It was after six when they, at last, gave up all hope of the rain ceasing, and came

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“sloshing” home, wet through and through. Not that they minded that, for Rog jumped up and down under the cataract of the overflowing eaves by the kitchen door and shouted how jolly the water felt when “it oozed in your shoes around your toes.”

When they entered the house in a sloping clutter there was no one in the kitchen to exclaim over their state and hustle them up stairs; no sight of Minnie; no pleasant preparation for supper going on. The clock on the shelf ticked loudly and the tea kettle was singing gently to itself—that was all.

“Well,” said Vi, doffing her tomboyishness and putting on her young ladyhood—she wore all manners and dropped them like a cloak these days. “Well, it seems we have mistaken the hour, or else our maid has deserted us.”

“Fudge!” growled Mal, the warm breath of the kitchen making him feel too soppy and uncomfortable for further scoffing, though Vi did perplex him unusually, “I’m hungry and I want my supper, and—say,

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I'll bet something *is* the matter, for Minnie never forgot us in her life," and throwing open the back stair door he shouted at the top of his voice:

"Mamma, Minnie—what's up? 'Anything the matter? Mamma-a-a!'"

"Sh-sh-sh!" came the voice of Bassbinder's Winnie from the head of the stairs. "Hush, this minute. Do you want to kill her a second time?"

"Kill who?" gasped Vi, staring up, white as chalk, over Mal's shoulder. "Kill who—not—not mamma?"

"Poor little Hippy, that you left to be blowed and drowned in that nasty ship—little you cared!" she sniffed at them fiercely. "Now you hush up and *keep* quiet down there, and don't you dare go out of that kitchen!"

And there Minnie found the poor things huddled together, "scared stiff" with what Winnie had said and not said. But Minnie didn't scold, she just took them in her kind strong arms, and told them all about it. Soothing and cheering she hurried them into

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dry comfortable clothing, and then got them an extra good supper in a jiffy. That was Minnie's way.

But for all that Hippy was too ill to see them for several days. She lay on her mother's bed, or sat at the open window, surrounded by every gift in the power of Tillatoba Valley to offer.

It was Silva she asked to see first, and Mrs. Helter was glad of that, since quiet Silva Luna could excite no one. Hippy had been told how bravely Silva had gone down the ladder and brought help.

"Not really, mamma, not really?" Hippy burst out.

"Yes, really—and we're all so proud that Silva is such a little heroine. It took the best of bravery to go down the ladder in the storm when she was so afraid. That is the highest sort of courage." But Hippy turned her face to the wall and lay very still.

"Now you little girls can have a pleasant quiet time together for a whole hour," Mrs. Helter said, when she ushered Silva in—so green and white, and starched and stiff

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for the visit she looked more like a top than ever.

“How-d’-do, Silva?” said Hippy softly, when her mother had withdrawn, and they were quite alone together.

Silva nodded and came slowly toward the window, holding Cordelia close to her green and white checked breast. She swallowed hard as she saw how pale and thin Hippy looked, but no words came, and, having no bonnet string to chew, she tried one of her own pink fingers.

For the first time in her life Hippy felt shy. Since the day of the storm she had lived through the scene on the ship waking and dreaming. It had all seemed like a very bad dream when she remembered how she had called Silva, her dearest friend, hard names and had threatened to strike her. It had hurt before, but it had become an awful pang to Hippy when her mother told her of Silva’s bravery. The worst pang was,—and Hippy’s mind fairly ran away from it—in the wonder if, after all, Silva had been brave, or had only been more afraid to stay when she thought Hippy

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dead, than she was of the ladder and the storm. It was too deep a question for Hippy and she let it alone. Yet she felt she couldn't tell her mother what had really taken place on the *Furious Rover*, though she knew the confession would ease her own heart. If she told she would also have to tell of Silva's cowardice, and Silva *had* been a coward, even Hippy's remorse didn't blind her to that, and she couldn't bear to pull Silva down from her pedestal—for Silva was now the heroine of the Scowling Scoots.

"I . . . I . . ." said Hippy, not looking at Silva, but out of the open window. "I'm sorry I said those dreadful things and I'm so glad I . . . didn't hit you, Silva. For mamma said that it was the very best kind of bravery that made you go down the ladder all by yourself. I . . . I . . ." There were tears in Hippy's eyes.

But Hippy had passed beyond Silva's depth—for Silva was, after all, a Bass-binder—and so, taking her finger out of her mouth, she gave utterance to the most astonishing speech Hippy thought she had ever heard.

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"I'm glad you didn't hit me, 'cause it would have hurt, and I'm glad you weren't dead, Hippy—but I am awfully glad I had to climb down the ladder, because I have not been one bit afraid since."

"Silva!" cried Hippy, all aglow with sympathy.

"Why, I went up and down ten times yesterday, and Vi gave me her blue beads, and Plug his three cornered Good Hope stamp, and Mal made me a whistle. Pa says I can begin to drive Deacon now, and Captain Page and Martin are going to break him better—ma says she doesn't care, since I'm so awfully brave."

Evidently Silva had forgotten all about the "blue flunk" she had shown the day of the storm, or, at least, she remembered it with no sense of shame. Hippy opened her lips, but she closed them without speaking. During their friendship Hippy had tried to make Silva feel many things she herself felt so deeply, but it had been useless, and she knew it would be useless now.

The captain and Aunt Kitty had both

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been there; Mrs. Bassbinder had brought her quince jelly and floating island, and Aunt Chat spent her time concocting dainties for her little favourite; but it was some days before kind-hearted Sandy had the courage to call on Hippy.

“Shiver me!” said he, closing his knotted old fingers over her mite of a hand, while tears stood in his kind old eyes. “Here’s my little shipmate, ready to sign A. B. over any landlubber as walks. Shipwrecked, says you? Same as me off Cape Sable. Brave, says you? Well, now that’s the word. Stood by your ship ’til the last, like any captain. Never left her ’til I carried you off myself, so white and little that you might have been done for, far as an old salt like me knowed. But, split me, here you are as good as new.”

It seemed so good to see Sandy cuddling his double chin in his throat whiskers and to hear his funny talk again. Hippy would have him sit down for a visit, and someway before he left she had confided to him—“cross-his-heart-and-hope-to-die” he

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wouldn't tell—that just as soon as ever she got well she was going to dig again for the buried treasure.

“For, you see, Sandy,” she explained, “since I’ve been ill—now don’t you *ever* tell—I feel I just can’t go away to New York to the hospital without mamma. I want to be brave, but oh, I do want her so. Mamma and I have had some lovely talks about it, and—and, you know, the captain is giving us all the money for me to go, and the hospital is so expensive that it wouldn’t be right to take more money when we don’t know how we can ever get it paid back. Of course, I’ll be just as safe as *safe* with Doctor Jimmie, but it will be so awful not to see her when . . . and then it ’most breaks her heart to have me go away—and, don’t you tell, but I’m *going* to find the treasure. . . I’ve just prayed about it hard, Sandy, and I’m going to *find* it, and bring it to her my own self.”

The next day Hippy was out again ambling about on her little crutch, to be made so much of by everyone—even Bassbinder’s

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Winnie—that Hippy said it was really worth being shipwrecked—especially when one considered the dignity she and Silva had acquired in the eyes of the Scoots. They were invited to become real pirates, since it would never do to have the only shipwrecked members for prisoners. Pester and Mother, who had at last grown friendly, had to wear the paper chains from this time on.

That night Hippy, now back in her own room with Vi, found it very hard to sleep. Plan after plan she made to find the very spot covering the buried treasure, but none would come that seemed any better than the ones they had tried, and so, at last, she crept out of bed, and sat by the window to look longingly over toward Treasure Cave. Oh, the money bags and the family silver were down there somewhere under her very eyes, if she only knew just where to dig!

Hippy's eyelids were growing droopy and she was about to go back to bed, when suddenly from below, Pester broke into glad yapping as he darted away down the garden

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path and under the meadow gate. The moon was high in the night blue of the sky, sheets of white cloud were passing and passing over it, but by its light she could see Pester "cutting didos" about the figure of a man, who was crossing the meadow toward the ravine. The moon crept out of a bank of clouds and sent a stronger beam full on *Sandy*, for it was he about whom Pester was capering! Sandy going to Treasure Cave—but for what? Hippy was on her knees now, her elbows on the window sill, her palms propping up her little white chin.

Sandy stopped only once and that was at the grotto. Hippy felt a chill at her faithful heart; it was the key, then, Sandy wanted; he was going to open the cupboard. Dear old Sandy was about to look under the stones—to become a villy-viley sneak!

It seemed to Hippy it was hours she waited there upon her knees, but, at last, around the corner of the rock came Sandy, running at the top of his speed, a lighted lantern, swinging from his hand, throwing

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queer shadows as he stumbled over the field, while after him tore Pester—across the meadow, over the wall, to be lost in the shadow of the orchard.

Still Hippy waited, she scarcely knew for what. The moon now dim, now bright, peopled the meadow with shadows. The familiar world looked strange and elfin; such an eerie stillness was out there in the meadow that the shrilling of the katydids beneath her window seemed friendly and grateful. Something else must happen, she thought, shivering in her little white gown. So she waited and waited—and then something *did* happen, for over the wall came Sandy and the captain, they hurried toward the rock, they disappeared behind it.

Half an hour later, a puzzled, tired and chilly little girl crept into bed by Vi. The captain and Sandy had gone home, Pester was curled on the cellar door, there was nothing more to see, she was too drowsy to wonder longer, and nestling down like a little dormouse Hippy was soon asleep.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PICKLE JAR

HIPPY awoke early the next morning. No one was up in the house, when she quietly let herself out of the kitchen door and started down the garden path. Pester arose with a yawn and a stretch and came frolicking after.

“What were you, and Sandy, and the captain, doing at Treasure Cave last night, sir? Did you laugh at my peacock feather and my Sunday School tickets?” asked Hippy, sternly shaking a thin reproving finger at Pester. But Pester only wagged his tail, stuck up one saucy ear, lopped the other, and trotted gaily on before, as if to say: “Come on and see for yourself, Hippy.”

The meadow was gay in its mid-summer best that early morning, ruffled with the soft pink of the Joe-Pye weed and the snow of

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the snake root; fringed with the purple of iron weed; gilded with wild sunflowers; laced with cobwebs; jewelled with dewdrops. There was perfume of everlasting and pennyroyal, the music of grasshoppers, and crickets, and buzzing bees, and it was all so fresh, and bright, and new-made, and there in the sunshine basked the old grey rocks as they had for all time.

Hippy stopped first at the grotto, but there was the rusty key hidden away on the farthest ledge where surely no one but a Scowling Scoot could ever have found it.

“M—m—m!” repented Hippy, “Sandy must have just stopped for a drink, and he isn’t a villy-viley sneak at all, Pester.”

But Pester had already disappeared around the corner, and when Hippy followed him she found the dog rapturously digging in a pile of freshly turned soil, right in front of the cave, the loosened earth flying in a cloud from under his brisk little feet.

“Why, Pester *Helter!*” gasped Hippy.

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“Oh, oh, oh! and *that* was what dear Sandy and the captain were doing! They were helping me dig for the treasure, and now you are helping, too—oh—o—o!” For just then her sharp eyes discovered two golden coins in the earthy rill Pester was frantically flinging behind him—the soil was soft, for Sandy had made sure that it would be easy for weak little hands to dig.

“Wait, Pester, wait!” cried Hippy, wild with excitement. “Wait until I get something to dig with! Let me help!” The only thing in sight was the half of a broken plate, loved for its blue and white decoration, but down she went on her hands and knees with that. Pester growled at his task, as he always did, digging faster and faster, when suddenly between his little fore feet appeared a round, brown knob.

“What’s that, Pester, what’s that?” shrieked Hippy, just as if Pester knew they weren’t digging for bones—Pester, who spent his happiest moments digging. “What is that little round thing, Pester?” and pushing him aside Hippy went at it her-



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self, soon to lay bare the top of what seemed to be a large stone jar, with a round knob topping its lid.

Hippy was so excited she forgot Pester, who was now prancing about, barking like mad to get back at his digging. Carefully she shook the knob—the lid came off—cautiously she lifted it and peeped inside.

“Oh—o—o!” she sighed rapturously. There they all were, black and discoloured, to be sure—but there was no mistaking the Pollock family silver—“a dozen forks, a dozen spoons, three candlesticks and a soup ladle,” whispered Hippy, as she drew them out one by one. The spoons and forks were tied together by what might have been a gay ribbon when great-great-Grandmother Pollock hid them there—and away at the bottom lay two bags of money.

Back into the jar Hippy thrust all the treasure but the soup ladle and the two coins Pester had thrown up. Then she put the lid on the jar, covered it loosely with earth, and taking her crutch, called reluctant Pester and started for the house.

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Never had the way seemed so long, nor her crutch so lagging.

"Oh, oh, for two good feet!" she sighed. "But I'll have them soon, and won't I make them fly! Now mamma will go with me to New York. Goody, goody! Pester, Pester, wait for me!"

"For mercy sake, Hippy!" called Minnie from the kitchen door, "what are you doing out in that dewy meadow, dearie, and you just sick. Your mamma won't like it."

"Oh, Minnie," shrieked Hippy, trying to hop faster. "Pester and I have found the treasure—we've found the treasure! And here's the soup ladle to prove it!"

"Mrs. Helter, please . . . Mrs. Helter! . . ." screamed Minnie, throwing open the back stair door. "Come quick! Hippy's gone crazy, she's found an old black spoon and she thinks it's that silver soup ladle! Come quick!"

Down to the kitchen rushed the Helters, the little mother scared out of her wits 'til she had Hippy safe in her arms.

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"Oh, mamma," begged Vi, "is it the treasure? Is it the treasure?"

"Well, this is surely Grandmother Pollock's old ladle, but these two coins," replied her mother, poring over them, "are dated only twenty years ago and are South American, I don't understand that."

But you mustn't suppose Mal and Rog were willing to wait for any explanation. "Oh, come, everybody come!" they kept urging.

"Mercy me! Let's get there, Mrs. Helter. Somebody might be stealing the treasure this blessed minute," cried Minnie, and snatching up Hippy, crutch and all, in her strong arms, she ran out followed by the whole family.

"I'm so heavy, Minnie. Don't carry me," protested Hippy.

"You're light as a feather in Minnie's arms this day, dear heart. If your mamma has got the money to go with you to New York seems as if my heart will just about burst with gladness," panted Minnie.

"I can't keep up, children, I can't keep

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up," gasped little Mrs. Helter. Then everybody went more slowly, to Pester's great disgust. But there they were at last, gathered about that wonderful jar with the little round knob topping its lid.

"Glory be, if it ain't a mate to one of them old pickle jars like we found down in the cellar!" exclaimed Minnie, as she cleared off the earth and lifted it out. "Now what do you think of that?"

"And oh, it's got lumps of rosin on the lid!" shrieked Vi, "great-great-grandmother sealed it up like jam!"

"Well, it has been here fully one hundred years," said her mother, and then into her lap they heaped the treasure.

"A *dozen* forks, a *dozen* spoons," sang Rog, capering about like a brownie. "Three candlesticks . . .!"

"*And* a soup ladle," finished Hippy, flourishing it over her head.

"Two bags of money!" shouted Mal, as he tumbled them into his mother's lap—two old leather, musty, mouldy things, and very, very light money bags, it seemed. "I guess

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great-grandma didn't have much saved, mamma."

"Oh, oh, they've spilled out! Just look here!" screamed Vi, and reaching into the jar she brought up a handful of loose money, queer coins from South America and Spain.

"Why, these aren't—from the bags—why, none of these coins are over twenty years old," gasped her mother, looking at the dates. "And besides these musty old bags are still sealed with the Pollock seal. Hippy, dear, how did you find this treasure yourself, and was the jar sealed, too?"

"Why, no, mamma," said Hippy. "Pester and I found it this morning, but it was all dug up around and the jar was opened, because, you see, Sandy and the captain found it in the night."

"*Oh!*" said her mother, "then that explains it."

But it didn't, at least not at first, for when Vi went flying over to Redroof and brought back the captain and Mrs. Gordon and Sandy—Vi had insisted on Sandy's coming, but he lagged behind and looked much dis-

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turbed—Captain Page declared he knew absolutely nothing about the new coins.

“So you were too sharp for us, little shipmate,” laughed the captain, when Hippy told them what she had seen in the night, “but you see it was all old Sandy. He came down here to dig for the Pollock treasure—or so he says—and, finding it, came running after me. We both decided that since the children had so nearly struck it—why, you weren’t six feet out of the way, my dears, you only went under the rock instead of outside, as you should, if you had had more experience in digging for treasure buried by old ladies—why, we agreed to say nothing, and fix it so you children should find it. But, Sandy,” whispered the captain, turning the old sailor confidentially away by the button hole, “how about these new coins?”

Sandy with a watery grin drew the back of his hand across his mouth and was silent.

“Sandy! Sandy!” drawled the captain deep in his throat. “Were you digging for treasure right at this cave door?”

“Well . . . well, sir,” stammered

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Sandy, "I heard tell once, I did, of a chap that salted a mine by just puttin' in a few nuggets and a little dust to lead a-body on."

"Oh, so you were salting the treasure, making it easier for Hippy to find," chuckled the captain, "deep old Sandy, wise old dog!"

But later in the day when the two men were alone, the captain said again:

"When you were doing that salting of yours, I rather suspect you intended to furnish the treasure, too. Eh, Sandy?"

"I've 'crossed-my-heart-and-hope-to-die' I have, sir, and I ain't tellin' no tales. The bag in my ditty box was only a trouble to me anyhow, sir, and so help me forty v'ygies, that little mother was a-goin' to the hospital with Hippy, if it busted me."

"Right you were, Sandy," exclaimed the captain, clapping him on the shoulder, "but you might have let me in on your lay, you didn't need to turn selfish in your good deeds."

"So I might, sir, so I might," grinned the old sailor, "only I had a sort of likin' of

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doin' it all myself. Then such Lord's luck as I had striking that there pot! I might have knowed it, though, for Hippy had been layin' 'em aboard with prayers, she had! I seen stars when my spade struck that there jar I ain't never seen from the deck of a ship."

"But that handful of coin you chucked in for luck when I wasn't looking. Aw, Sandy, Sandy!"

"Well, you see, sir, them bags is light," went on Sandy, scratching his head. "Split me, if they ain't. You may lay to it Captain Kidd didn't have the burying of 'em; more likely it were the old lady's hen money. But it weren't no go, you couldn't fool that little woman, she give my gold back to me and what she said—I felt as if I'd drawed a medal. I wish them Pollock money bags had more heft, sir, I do."

"Kitty," said the captain to Mrs. Gordon that night, "Jimmie doesn't sail until next week and I'm going to telegraph him to run down again. I've felt worried about Hippy ever since the storm, and I want him

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to see that colonial money of Helter's. I know nothing in the world about coins, but Jimmie has been collecting them since he was a boy, it's a hobby of his. There are about three hundred dollars in the bags, but the coins are old and perhaps Jimmie might be able to make a little more out of them for Mrs. Helter. At least it's worth looking into."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BRASHER DOUBLOONS

WELL, Jack, how goes it; any news?" asked Doctor Jimmie, stepping into the trap.

"None of Mead," replied the captain sadly, as Prince trotted down the village street. Captain Page had driven down to the station for the doctor, who had telegraphed he could only come for a day, as he was to sail on Wednesday. "It is as if the boy had been swallowed up. If it wasn't for my little folks in the valley, who absorb so much of my time and thought, I could hardly endure it. It is a case of conscience, Jimmie; I ought never to have listened to Sir Austin. The boy was mine as well as his, and in wholly giving him up I shirked a sacred responsibility."

"Nonsense," said the doctor, "you did what any unselfish man would have done un-

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der the circumstances. No one could have foretold this, but we'll find him. A boy of fifteen doesn't vanish off of the face of the earth in these days. A boy with Edgar's blood in him will know how to take care of himself. I'll stake my life on that."

"I'm afraid he's gone to Australia, feeling, perhaps, that since I have neglected him so I've never cared for him."

"You're morbid," said Doctor Jimmie. "There's something in my medicine case that will tone you up, and the minute I get to London I will see what can be done at that end of the line. And now tell me about the Helter Skelters."

The Scowling Scoots had been seen and interviewed—how Doctor Jimmie delighted in them! A dry voyage had been sailed in the *Furious Rover*, during which Hippy, without knowing it, was always under her doctor's eyes—and he had duly given his opinion of her condition to her anxious mother. A little nervous from the fright in the storm, a little thin and pale, as was to be expected, but nothing to worry over.

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Indeed, since seeing her this second time, he felt more hopeful of the operation. The great danger would be in the shock to such a delicate nervous system, but he had much faith in Hippy's wonderful will-power. And now after dinner Mrs. Gordon, Doctor Jimmie, and the captain had gathered about the library table to take a look at the treasure, which Mrs. Helter had sent over at Captain Page's request.

"Of course," the captain was saying, as he fumbled with the string of one of the mouldy old bags. "This may be nothing but junk to a coin collector. As nearly as I can estimate it isn't worth more than three hundred dollars at its face value, but I wasn't going to lose any chance . . ."

"Hurry up, Jack. The way you play with that string shows how little you know of the collector's fever," chuckled Doctor Jimmie. "I'd have come twice as far, without the bait of Hippy, to have had the first glimpse of what's in those bags before a dealer has had his greedy paws on it."

"Jimmie Cuyler," laughed Mrs. Gordon,

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shaking her finger at him, "your eyes glitter just as they used to when we saw watermelons through Deacon Nash's fence."

"And I feel just the same way, Kitty. Here, Jack, dump 'em both out at once and let's see what we've caught."

Out poured a motley collection, both glittering and tarnished, for in spite of great-great-grandmother's careful sealing with rosin, the silver lay black, with the copper that was corroded green, among the gold, glowing rich and mellow.

Made up of the indiscriminate currency of Colonial times and the early eighteenthundreds there were Continental dollars and Mark Newbys, Carolina Elephants, Mott tokens, and Connecticut deer and hammers; there were old Joes, and ducats, and guineas, and doubloons; and there were Pine Tree shillings, and Rosa Americanas, and Franklin pennies, on which you were advised to "Mind your business"; and upon all of them were imprinted pictures of beasts and birds, hearts, harps, ships, crowns, roses,

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hammers, axes, shields, sundials; and more than all, faces of men and women, some beautiful and noble, and some wicked, ugly, fat and silly.

"Great Jehosaphat!" cried Doctor Jimmie, laying his finger tip on a little coin and drawing it for a closer look. "Score one for the Helter Skelters, a half dime of 1802, about forty dollars for that, at any pig dealers."

"Oh, how beautiful," exclaimed Mrs. Gordon, all excitement, "Oh, Jimmie, they will be rich, why here's a half dollar of 1795!"

"Worth about seventy-five cents, I should say," commented the doctor, his eyes twinkling.

"Now, Jimmie, you're teasing," reproached Mrs. Kitty, so much in her little girl way they all laughed. "You said yours was only a half dime, and mine is fifty cents, and seven years older."

"Oh, but you see, Kitty, it isn't age, and it isn't face value that sets the price on a coin," explained the doctor. "I can get

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you Greek and Roman coins two thousand years old, and plenty of them, at twenty-five cents each. It's rarity that counts; find me here one 1804 silver dollar and Mrs. Helter may take a laugh at poverty; but one of 1803 won't be worth much over two dollars. Strange game, you think, but that's what makes it so interesting. It's just *what* Grandma Pollock saved, not how much, that will matter to her heirs."

"And we can't help you a bit," sighed the captain. "I'd like to have a hand in making Hippy an heiress."

"M—m," mumbled the doctor half to himself, pushing the coins about as if they were checkers. "Two United States dollars of 1794, forty dollars each—good for you, Grandma Pollock! Jumping goats! Here's the United States 1000 mills dollar . . . Eye . . . Moon . . . Constellatio . . . I'll give two hundred for that myself . . . but grandma, grandma, why, after that good work, did you save these five measly 1798 dollars? . . . Oh, here's a Carolina Elephant copper worth one hun-

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dred dollars—that's much better, old lady, much better."

"Oh, how exasperating it is to be so stupid," cried Mrs. Gordon, staring at the coins eagerly through her lorgnette, "it makes me wild to see you, Jimmie, counting up money for the children like that and not be able to help. Jack, can't you do something?"

"I'm afraid not. If I had known it was so much fun I should have spent my youth studying numismatics instead of navigation. Here's a funny old gold piece, Kitty, I wonder what Jimmie will say it's worth?" And the captain slid the coin over to his sister. The doctor was studying a penny through his pocket microscope and seemed dead to the world. "Now is that a 6, or a 3?" he muttered.

"Here's another like that one I just showed you," went on the captain a moment later, in an undertone. "It must be a United States coin for here is the *unum E pluri-bus* . . . queer looking thing that eagle, isn't it? The fellow who made it wasn't

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much on art. There's the sun coming up over a mountain on the other side."

"Sh—sh—sh," whispered Mrs. Gordon. "Perhaps we disturbed Jimmie, talking."

"Oh, he is fifty fathoms deep, he wouldn't hear thunder," chuckled the captain. "Say, Kitty, that fellow must have approved of his own design—see, here on the eagle's wing is 'E. B.,' and on the other side he has signed in full 'Brasher.'"

"What!" shouted Doctor Jimmie. "What!"

"Mercy, Jimmie, how you startle one!" laughed Mrs. Gordon.

"Say it again, Jack—here, let me see the thing. What, two did you say? Grandma, grandma, blessings on your name!" Doctor Jimmie seized a coin between each thumb and finger, and waved them over his head, cheering like a boy.

"Hurrah!" roared the captain, joining in, as he always had, with Jimmie Cuyler all the days of their life.

"Hurrah!" cried Mrs. Kitty, waving her little lace handkerchief, her eyes swimming

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with happy tears. "Tell us quick, Jimmie, is it three hundred . . . five? Do tell us quick!"

"Give a fellow time to gloat, won't you, Kitty? Give him time to drink his fill; even a cat may look at a king, you know. Oh, you golden beauties! You're too rich for my blood; you'll never rest in my coffers; but you'll ring dead loads of pelf for Hippy out of somebody!"

"Say, Jimmie, how much do you think Kitty and I can stand?" asked the captain. "Drop the rhapsodising and get down to facts."

"Well," said the doctor, still inspecting the coin through his glass. "Down in little old Dutch-gabled New York in 1787, a man by the name of Ephraim Brasher coined these. They are doubloons, worth, face value, about sixteen dollars each, and Grandma Pollock couldn't have done the job better for our little folks, not even if she had waited a few years to capture a dollar or two of 1804. The Brashers are so rare that an old dealer will boast of having

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handled just one in his life. The last that turned up was sold in Philadelphia more than two years ago for sixty-two hundred dollars."

"And twice sixty-two hundred are twelve thousand four hundred!"

"Go head, Jackie boy, and moreover, the rest we have here will bring it, at auction, mind you—and I think we will try either Sotheby's, or Christie's, in London—will bring this buried treasure up to about fifteen thousand dollars."

"Jimmie!" exclaimed Mrs. Gordon, springing to her feet.

"Where are you going, Kitty?"

"To Mrs. Helter, of course. Think what this means to her. Why, Jack, she's been the bravest little soul imaginable since her husband's death. You can hardly realise what this will mean to her."

"Easy, easy!" said the captain. "Now I'm not doubting Jimmie's judgment, but we won't clap on too much sail for the little lady. Tell her the coins are of greater value than we at first thought, and ask her

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permission for Jimmie to take them abroad, if he thinks that's the best lay. But as for getting everybody by the ears . . . no, say I. What, that old mouldy-looking lot of pot-metal worth fifteen thousand? Stuff!"

But Doctor Jimmie only laughed as he delved deeper in the heap and laid coin on coin. "Well thought out, Jack, you're only jealous because I found Hippy's fortune."

"You didn't, I found the Brasher doubloons."

"You didn't," laughed Mrs. Gordon, "Sandy did. But I'll wait, if you say so, Jack."

CHAPTER XIX

A TIME OF SUSPENSE

THE summer days went swiftly enough, with all that was going on in Tillatoba Valley. Never was there a prouder little whip than Silva the first day she drove Deacon down the turnpike, with Hippy beside her in a pony cart.

"Bless her," said her mother proudly, though it was still a pang to see the pony cart "used so common." "What a brave child Silva is!"

"You'd better be prayin' they get back with their necks safe," muttered Winnie under her breath, and to tell the truth Silva, in spite of her lofty bearing, had her heart in her mouth. How could she be sure, as the captain was, that Deacon was now but a sheep in spirit—if Captain Page hadn't been sure why, *you* may be sure those

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little girls never would have driven Deacon.

As for Hippy she was so happy these days her blue eyes shone. To walk like other little girls, she never doubted that; and then to see the ocean—Captain Page had promised that before she came home she was to see the Atlantic. And besides these things—being a very human little girl, this last joy had caused her heart to dance gaily—there were all the pretty new things her mother and Aunt Kitty and the village seamstress were making to lay away in the new trunk. That so many dainty night-dresses were there, that her mother and Aunt Kitty sewed with fear in their hearts, didn't trouble Hippy, first, because she didn't realise just what it meant, but most because a gallant little soul rode in her breast. No fear was there of any kind since her nervousness had passed away, only quiet assurance and a gay uplift that made everyone about her love her more than ever.

Many times a day she hopped into the spare-room and opened the closet door to take satisfying peeps at the little tan pon-

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gee gown, with its stylish coat, and the big tan hat that hung over it.

"My going-away gown," she said to Silva the day she showed it to her.

"Oh, Lord, may it be her coming-back gown!" sobbed Minnie, who had overheard her from the linen closet.

There was one other person beside Hippy who didn't seem to worry and that was Sandy.

"Huh!" he grunted when the captain one day groaned aloud, as he saw Hippy blowing kisses to him from the deck of the *Furious Rover*. "Huh! you don't one of you, sir, not even her mother, know that child like this old sailor does. She'll sail through with flying colours, sir, I'll lay to that, she will! There's stuff in her to make life out of—she ain't going to die, not in forty v'yages, so help me! Don't you worry, sir."

"Doctor Cuyler himself fears for her, Sandy, she's so little, so frail," groaned the captain.

"And so gritty, sir!" thundered Sandy, as if he couldn't stand it another minute.

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"She'll live, she'll live, sir, she'll *live!*" But for all that Sandy struck across the meadow toward the wood, and didn't come back until night—not that Sandy was worrying, not he!

It was the very next day that, hat in hand and grinning sheepishly, he appeared before Mrs. Gordon, as she sat sewing on the veranda. Stooping, he laid three gold coins in her lap.

"If so be, Mistress Gordon, you'd humour an old sailorman he'd be that pleased as never was," he stammered.

"Why, Sandy, I'd be so glad to help you," said Mrs. Gordon, smiling up at him; "you know I never forget that I wouldn't have my dear brother if it weren't for you. I'm just longing to do something for you. What is it you want?"

"Well . . . well . . . I s'pose the captain would be thinkin' I was off my course," replied Sandy, cuddling his chin and growing fiery red, "but you see, oncet I sighted, I did, on shipboard, a little sick girl—her folks was some grandees, most like, but any

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ways she was too bad to be wearing a frock, and her ma had her in one of them things I've seen folks wear in Japan. It was blue and was broke out all over with them long legged birds you call cranes, I guess."

"A kimona," said Mrs. Gordon gently, and not smiling, "yes, Sandy——"

"I'd like you to get one for Hippy. I don't want no money saved on it. If that ain't enough there's plenty more in my ditty box. The captain says a man can get anything that's to be had on the globe in New York, and . . . and let it be one blue with birds."

"But this is so much money, Sandy."

"Be it so!" And he threw up his knotty old hand palm out. "Tain't none too good for *her*. I want to see her in it."

"You shall, Sandy, you shall," cried Mrs. Gordon, understanding him. "It shall be fit for a little princess, I promise you, and we'll add blue Turkish slippers. You'll see."

And Sandy did; about a week after Mrs. Gordon had accepted his commission. Such a moment as that was to Sandy when Hippy

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came swinging out on the veranda at Red-roof to show him how fine she was.

A little quilted blue silk kimona, with flights of exquisitely embroidered storks, enwrapped her, the little blue, gold-embroidered slippers were on her feet.

"Oh, Sandy, you dear Sandy," cried Hippy, "see me, see me! See my beautiful storks and my slippers with their turned-up toes. I'm just like a fairy, Sandy, except the wings."

"Don't you go to gettin' no wings, little shipmate," choked Sandy, "you promise old Sandy you'll steer clear of wings."

"I promise, Sandy, and oh, I thank you so much. Not another little girl in New York will be so fine as I am, just because of you, dear old Sandy. And I'm coming home with two good walking feet. Oh, I'll dance and dance every step of the way, and I'll never go clickety-clack any more. *To-morrow*, I'm going to-morrow, Sandy, and won't we all be happy when I come home?"

"Ay, ay, little shipmate," said Sandy reverently.

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But the next day after the delightful trip with her mother, and the captain, and Mrs. Gordon, for they all went with her—when Hippy entered the silence of the hospital and the great muffled doors closed so softly behind them, then, for a moment, it was hard.

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The new moon hung in wisps of cloud over Treasure Rock, the masts of the *Furious Rover* stood stark against the evening sky, and everywhere the katydids and crickets were at vespers.

At Redroof the hall light only made a gloom in the darkness of the empty library. Over at Bassbinder's the family had gathered upon the porch. Silva sat in her mother's lap, Plug lounged on the steps, and no one spoke.

The old farm-house across the way had more than its usual number of lights, Minnie had seen to that—the doors and the windows stood open, she had set the supper table with the best china and had prepared a favourite

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dish, but the supper still simmered on the back of the range.

"You ain't got a bit of heart, Min," grumbled Bassbinder's Winnie, rocking nervously back and forth, as Minnie hurried about the kitchen. "I don't see how you can be a fixin' flowers on the table and all that."

"They haven't eaten a thing hardly to-day, the poor little dears," replied Minnie, sitting down to peel peaches, "and if fixin' things will help their appetites, why, I'm going to do it. It's all I can do now, and there aint no use of acting as if . . . as if there was a death in the family . . . not . . . yet anyway. If only Mrs. Gordon and the captain were here to cheer them up it wouldn't be half so bad; but with them gone and their ma, too, it's been awful. Even Sandy hasn't come near them this day. I guess he just couldn't, and Mal's been to the telegraph office since about four . . ."

Just then Vivian came out from the dining-room. She wore her mother's long black skirt and had her hair done high on her head,

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but on her beautiful face was such a sweet, faint semblance of her mother that even Winnie didn't have the heart to sniff.

"Minnie, I really think Rog ought to have his supper," said Vivian, with a little catch in her voice. "I . . . I know it's awfully hard to eat, but I'm sure mamma would want us to. Mal must have gone to a restaurant, it's so late."

"Then, Miss Vivian, I'll dish right up," said Minnie; it was the first time she had ever so addressed Vi, and she might never do it again, but just now it meant to them both far more than a caress. It was that she quite understood how hard Vivian was trying to be womanly. There was no trace of over-acting the part now.

Vivian sat in her mother's place with Rog at the foot of the table. How empty the cheerful dining-room seemed with the three vacant places!

"Be present at our table, Lord,"

sang Vi, just as they had all sung grace since they had been big enough to carry the tune.

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“‘Be here, as everywhere, adored.’”

“I . . . I can’t sing it, Vi,” choked Rog, putting his head down on his arm with a sob, “don’t let’s sing to-night . . . it . . . it makes it seem worse.”

“All . . . all right, Roggie, we won’t. I . . . I guess the Lord will understand,” agreed Vi; “let’s plan what we’ll do for a jubilee when our Hippy comes home.”

“Mrs. Bassbinder said to Minnie this morning, I . . . I heard her,” sobbed Rog, “that she didn’t believe Hippy would ever come home.”

“Mrs. Bassbinder doesn’t know a blessed thing about it,” blazed Vi, “and, besides, she’s got no business to say so,” and suddenly remembering that her mother would never have said that, “at least, at least . . . oh, Rog, we must trust Doctor Jimmie . . . and . . . and God, you know. He would never take our Hippy.”

“Maybe, maybe,” sobbed Rog, “God wants her up there. Our Hippy is an awful lot of company.”

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"Rog Helter, you stop!" cried Vivian—she was all Vi now. "You just hush up! He can't have our Hippy. Why, He's just got *everything*—and we need her, there are only five of us. He's got our father now."

"Hush, Vi dear," said Minnie, who was just bringing in their tea. "You mustn't say such things. It won't be long now till we know."

"Oo—oo—ee!" rang faintly through the night, "Oo—oo—ee!"

"It's Mal," cried Vi, springing to her feet. "Oh, Minnie, it's Mal!"

Out of the house they ran, Vivian, Rog, Minnie and Bassbinder's Winnie.

"Oo—ee, oo—ee!" yodled Mal, far down the road, and now the swift clatter of Deacon's feet upon the turnpike could be plainly heard.

There they gathered in the road, the Helters and the Bassbinders and old Sandy, who started up by the gate where he had been waiting for the last hour.

Out of the wood and up the dip, under

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the dim light of the new moon they saw Mal coming.

"O Lord," prayed Mrs. Bassbinder.

"Mal! *Mal!*" wailed Vivian, though she knew he could not hear her.

"*Oo—ee! oo—ee!*" yodled Mal.

"Oh, Mal, please Mal," begged Vi.

"*Oo—ee, oo—ee,*" then he was among them waving a telegram over his head. "She's all right! She's all right!" he shouted. "Mother says: 'All over and wonderfully successful. Hippy sends her dearest love.'"

"Oh, oh . . . I can't *bear* it!" cried Vivian, and she sank in a little happy sobbing heap at Sandy's feet.

"You bet I can!" yelled Plug, jumping straight up and down, with a whoop at every caper.

"Come all in the house this minute, every one of you," and Minnie fiercely wiped her tears with her apron. "Come on Mr. Bassbinder and Sandy. Do come, Mrs. Bassbinder. We ain't one of us hardly eat a bite this day, and Win and I'll clap a sup-

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per on the table before you can say Jack Robinson. It's victuals we all need now and plenty of 'em. Oh, Hippy, my blessed lamb!"

CHAPTER XX

IN THE SUNROOM

THE weeks went faster than Hippy had dared to hope. Already it was the first of October, and with the gay letters from home, and Doctor Jimmie's cheery visits, the adoring nurses, and the friendly house doctors, and every patient within reach worshipping as well, why the hospital days were very pleasant, now, since pain was over and a thing forgotten.

At first, of course, Hippy had some hard days in the little white bed, but bye and bye she was promoted to a wheel chair. Then her mother and the captain had gone home, leaving Hippy in the especial care of Nurse Edith—the nurse Hippy loved best, though Doctor Jimmie said he wanted it understood that Hippy was all his, and his only, since the captain had deserted her. Several promotions had come since the wheel

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chair; one had been when Doctor Jimmie began sending his automobile every day that she might have a ride in the park; another—and oh, that was a joyful time—was when she was allowed to take a few steps with Doctor Jimmie on one side and Nurse Edith on the other. It was such a happy time Nurse Edith had to go out into the hall to cry, all because Hippy was so joyful, and so dear, and now, bless you, sometimes she was allowed to walk a little way down the hall, and mind you, without a crutch, but with two feet placed firmly on the ground!

“Sunbeam’s got a conceit on her feet,” laughed Mrs. Carter, the old woman with the broken bones next door—as Hippy stood in the corridor looking down at her own two blue slippers with admiring eyes.

“Oh, Mrs. Carter,” she cried, “I just can’t help it—feet are so beautiful, when you can put them down together and the toes turn out. I just can’t get used to them. Oh, when I can wear my new tan boots and really walk big steps, you know, not tottering like this, I believe I’ll be ready to fly.”

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The new tan boots—the captain had ransacked the shops until he found a pair that just suited him—stood where Hippy could see them best when she opened her eyes in the morning, and whenever homesickness threatened, and a little wave of it *did* creep in now and then, Nurse Edith brought those pretty shoes, and the little crutch that still stood in the corner and held them up for her to see.

“Oh!” Hippy would gasp at this, “oh!” Then the wonderful gladness that seemed to shine from her soul would sweep back. “Oh, I’m not homesick, nursie. I just forgot for a minute, I’d . . . I’d stay a million years for that, but oh, they must be having such good times in the Valley, and there is a secret, Vi says so, and oh, how can I wait to have them see me walk?”

Every nurse on that floor knew all about the Valley, the Scowling Scoots and their lovely times. When they had a minute to spare they would fly in to sit with “Sunbeam”—the whole hospital called her that—and how they drank in the story of the bull-

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fight and the *Furious Rover* and Treasure Cave! How thrilling they thought the storm, and how they enjoyed Sandy, and Minnie and Winnie!

“Oh, me!” sighed Nurse Ruth—she was pretty and a young girl—“it makes me just long to be a little girl again, Sunbeam. Do tell us some more.”

Oh, Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Miller, and the rich old gentleman across the hall, and the young man in number twenty-two, and all the people in the sunroom loved to hear Hippy's stories, and bits of her home letters, and the sound of her cheery voice, as she rode up and down in her wheel chair, or walked with her nurse. Doctor Jimmie said if he had his way Hippy should be given a big salary to become a permanent fixture in the hospital, since she was a better tonic than any he had discovered so far. Why, even Doctor Ziller, the crossdest, surliest doctor on the board, smiled and patted her head whenever he saw her and never once spoke of her as “a case.”

One morning Nurse Edith had just

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dressed her in her pretty blue kimona and her blue slippers and was putting her in her chair when Nurse Ruth came flying in.

"Oh, Edith, may I take Sunbeam for a little while," she begged; "you know that nice boy who has been so ill in ward 2—he is such a nice young chap, but he doesn't seem to care to get well and mopes worse every day. The doctors agree that he must be roused and I told them if I could get Sunbeam we'd be made, but I was afraid Doctor Cuyler wouldn't lend her."

"I don't know," hesitated Hippy's nurse, "Doctor Cuyler won't be in until late, and I don't want to take the responsibility of letting Sunbeam go down to the charity ward. You know, Ruth, some persons are precious."

"Oh, nursie, you know you mean me," cried Hippy, "and I'm not a bit more precious person than that poor sick boy. Please tell me about him."

"Why, I don't know much to tell, sweetheart. He's as silent as a clam," the nurse replied, sitting down on the bed; "he came

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about the time you did. A man found the poor little chap lying unconscious on the steps of an empty house and brought him straight here. He was very, very ill for a long time. But there is no reason now that he should not get well, except that he doesn't seem to try. He is a Canadian, and his name is Davy Jones."

"Has he a locker?" asked Hippy, now all excitement.

"A locker?" questioned Ruth. "What sort of a locker, Sunbeam?"

"Why, Sandy sings such a scrumptious song about it," explained Hippy, and cocking up one eye, cuddling her chin in as Sandyish a manner as possible, she sang:

"Yo, clap on sail, my mates, and let
The old nor'easter rock her,
Yo, ho, the deck with brine is wet
From Davy Jones's locker."

"I think Sandy's song means the sea, Hippy," laughed Nurse Edith. "This boy isn't that particular 'Davy' Sandy sang about, I'm sure. Go on, Ruth."

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“Oh, there isn’t anything more to tell, except Doctor Ziller says he’ll get work for Davy as soon as he is able to leave. That goes to show, Edith, how attractive my boy is.”

“Whew! Well I should say so—Doctor Ziller! That boy must be worth knowing, but really, Ruth, I can’t let Sunbeam go without asking Doctor Cuyler.”

“Oh, please,” begged Hippy. “I’ll tell Doctor Jimmie all myself if you’ll let me, and I’ll say I coaxed. If you just knew how I want to see a live boy again, like Mal and Plug, and Rog. I do . . . get a little tired with so many all grown-up, and boys are so nice.”

“And my boy, especially,” laughed Ruth. “I’ll tell you, I’ll ask Doctor Ziller to let me take Davy out in the sunroom; there is nobody out there at this hour, but Mrs. Rogers, and she won’t be disturbed—and you can bring Sunbeam out there. Oh, honey, do see if you can’t get him to laugh with one of your *Furious Rover* stories. Why, I’ve never heard him laugh but once, and it

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was the jolliest chuckle, when it did come, you ever heard; and now I must skip."

Fifteen minutes later she looked in to call:

"All right! Down in half an hour," and again she was gone.

"Do I look just perfectly nice," asked Hippy excitedly. "Oh, if I could only wear my new tan boots!"

"You're most beautiful to behold as you are, and that boy will be sure to like blue and gold slippers with turned-up toes better than plain tan boots," the nurse smilingly assured her. "Anything more?"

"Yes, please, I'll take Vi's last letter—it's on the top of the pile—and Rog's—he'll like that,—and Silva Luna's. Now I'm ready. My, it's lovely to be going to talk to a really boy again," and Hippy fairly bounced in her chair.

He was a long, lean boy, as he lay back in his steamer chair, with black eyes too big for his face; but he was a nice boy, and a jolly boy, Hippy knew that the minute she caught sight of him, in the cozy corner

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where Nurse Ruth was just settling him. To be sure he wasn't looking very jolly just now, but there were certain signs of the jolly boy about him and Hippy caught them. She liked, too, the way he thanked Nurse Ruth, and she liked the way he greeted her when they were introduced, though he did look a bit bored at being left alone to talk to a girl, and such a little one.

"Are—are you any relation," began Hippy politely when the nurse had gone, "to that Davy Jones who had the locker?" It was an easy way to begin and it was all she could think of with those big black eyes looking at her.

The boy didn't seem to understand at first, and grew very red and stammered, "Pardon me," several times, and looked very uncomfortable, indeed.

"Why, the Davy Jones in the song, you know, with the yo-hos, yo-hos, and 'stand by the main sheet,' and 'clap on sail.'"

Then he understood, and suddenly into his lean, dark face flashed the very spirit of boyish mischief.

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"My hat!" he drawled, with inflections strange to Hippy. "How did you ever strike that? He was my great uncle on my mother's side. In fact I was named for that very old bird."

"What a queer talking boy!" thought Hippy, but he was all the more interesting for that; so she hastened to say:

"How lovely it is I have met you then. The Scowling Scoots will be so pleased! Nurse Edith said Sandy's song meant the sea; but I was sure it didn't, because, you know, it says"—and again Hippy cocked an eye, cuddled her chin, and piped as near as she could like Sandy:

"Yo, give her every yard o' sail,
And let the wild wind rock her;
Ho, tons o' suds ship o'er her rail
Her nose 's in Davy's locker."

"Golly, that's good!" cried Davy Jones, his merry eyes alight. "Give us some more, and say, who is Sandy?"

"Our Sandy is Sandy Slack," explained Hippy, smoothing down her blue silk front and hoping that the boy noticed her storks.

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“He’s the most wonderful sailorman that ever lived. He’s got the dearest, funniest red face (our Vi says he looks just like a big full moon), and he has fluffy white whiskers, sort of on his neck, you know that kind, and he rolls his funny old chin this way when he talks, and he can sing sea songs, and he can tie knots, and dance hornpipes, and tell just dandy stories about the South Seas, and desert islands, and cannibals. Silva and I don’t care much for them, not so *very* much, and our Vi doesn’t care near so much as she used to, but Mal, and Plug, and Rog, why, they’re just crazy about cannibals, and pirates, and those things, and Sandy . . .”

“I say,” broke in the boy, taking hold of his head with both hands as if he expected it to fly off. “Don’t spin it off so fast, you make my silly old head go whirl—I’ve been balmy on the crumpet—beg pardon,” he laughed, as he caught sight of Hippy’s blank stare. “I mean, I . . . well, I was out of my head with the fever. I was so ill I just lay there and jabbered, and I’m a bit weak yet, so when you go so fast . . .”

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"Oh, I'm so sorry. I forgot you had been so ill. I'll go just as slow as a snail," and Hippy looked so sweet and sympathetic the boy's heart was melted then and there.

"I say, old lady," and Davy's eyes were saying much his words didn't, "you are no end of a jolly lassie; make yourself comfy and give us the rummy tale."

"Ugh?" asked Hippy innocently—such a funny-talking boy.

"Pardon me," and the boy laughed until his even white teeth gleamed. "I guess—there, that's American for you—I guess you don't understand my speech, I'll translate. Please tell me more about your Sandy, and your Vi, and Plug—queer name that. I like it all, and I especially like you. Is that plain enough?"

"I'll tell you every word," promised Hippy, beaming, and reaching over to give his thin fingers a good squeeze. "I like you, too, ever so much, and the Scowling Scoots would just love you . . ."

"*'Scowling Scoots'*—Oh, gummy, that's good! Let's have it."

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Nurse Ruth, who had been watching them from behind a screen, being a young thing, danced a two step all by herself and then went quietly back to her ward.

“My boy is better already,” she said to scowling Doctor Ziller, who was just coming out of the door, “Sunbeam is worth all your medicine, doctor, and my nursing, and a lot more.”

CHAPTER XXI

DAVY JONES

OH, goody, it's another day!" exclaimed Hippy, when nurse Edith came softly in with her breakfast. "Please give me the pencil, nursie, 'til I mark it off." At the head of Hippy's bed hung a big red-figured calendar, one of the pair the captain had brought the day before he went home—one of them was for Hippy, and the other for the Scowling Scoots, and each morning a big black mark was to cross out the date. "One, two, three, four, five," counted Hippy happily. "Just five more days and then, oh, then, the captain is coming. Oh, goody, goody!"

"And I shall be all alone without a Sunbeam."

"But you promised mamma to come to visit us at Christmas, and I'll write to you,

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and oh, nursie, it is an awful long time to be away from your own precious mother. You've been just perfectly beautiful to me, you and Doctor Jimmie, and just everybody, and I do hate to leave my nice new boy. But oh, just think of seeing the Scowling Scoots again, and my dearest captain, and Aunt Kitty, and Minnie, and oh, just everybody—why, even Bassbinder's Winnie will sound good scolding, I do believe," laughed Hippy, "and there is Pester, oh, won't he be glad, and won't I hug him hard?—he's the dearest puppy. I just wonder if he'll know me really walking."

"To breakfast, to breakfast, little maid," broke in the nurse. "If you get going about walking we won't be through breakfast 'til dinner time."

"All right," agreed Hippy, "and you know Doctor Jimmie said I might go out in the loggia."

"Was there ever such a little buzzy bee?" laughed Nurse Edith. "See these grapes and peaches the doctor brought you last night, and the old gentleman across the hall

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called me to bring you in this beautiful pear."

"Oh, goody!" cried Hippy. "Please get my little basket that Aunt Kitty gave me. Oh, thank you so much! Now I'm going to put in this peach and this bunch of grapes—I suppose I ought to eat the pear; but I know Doctor Jimmie won't care if I give some of his lovely fruit to my poor sick boy. Let's put some of these nasturtiums that Mrs. Carter gave me, around the edge. There, isn't that beautiful, and won't he be pleased? Now you must have this peach, and Nurse Ruth this one."

"Charlotte Helter, are you going to eat your breakfast, or are you not?"

"I will, I will, if you won't call me Charlotte."

Then she did try to quiet down, and half an hour later Nurse Edith pushed her wheeled chair out on the sunny loggia.

"Aha! aha! here you are again!" called Davy Jones, so gaily he hardly seemed like the long lean boy who had so listlessly allowed Nurse Ruth to settle him in the

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steamer chair in the sunroom the morning before. Davy was lying in a hammock snugly covered up, for the October morning was a bit raw, and as Hippy saw him she tried to help the nurse urge her wheel chair toward him to present her dainty basket of fruit.

"Good-morning Davy, why, you are looking as bright as a button," said Nurse Edith, stopping a moment to smooth back his dark hair. "You are ever so much better, laddie, you'll be bidding us good-bye very soon."

"I *am* better, thank you," said Davy, flushing gratefully. "You've all been so ripping good to me I'd be a beast if I didn't repay it by giving up my bed."

"Oh, we're in no hurry to lose you, Davy," laughed Nurse Edith, "nor this Sunbeam either—we'll never get another such pair."

"Well, I'm going to leave you to amuse each other," she went on, tucking Hippy in her rug and tying a wisp of a blue veil about her head. "Doctor Cuyler said Sunbeam might stay out all day. Oh, Ruth,"

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she called, seeing her just inside the window, "it seems these two children have been plotting for a chat out here in the sunshine, and it is just as well, for there have been little sniffs of homesickness in 27. Will you keep an eye on them? If the wind changes they must be brought in."

"All right, and Doctor Ziller has ordered Mrs. Bell out for the day—here she comes now."

Mrs. Bell was a silent soul, and was soon deep in her novel at the other end of the loggia, and Hippy and her new friend were ready for a long talk.

"I think it's your turn to tell things," Hippy announced, turning an eager little face toward Davy, when the basket of fruit had been presented and accepted. "When I get home they'll ask and ask every single thing about you, and I don't know anything, except you are awfully thin, with big black eyes, and that you're from Canada, and your name is Davy Jones, after the locker man."

"From Canada?"

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"Why, yes, Nurse Ruth said so. Aren't you?"

"Oh, oh, yes, I came from Montreal—rummy old town that!"

"Haven't . . . haven't you any father or mother, Davy?" hesitated Hippy, longing to know all about "her boy," as she already called him to herself. "And—are there a whole lot of you, like there are of us?"

Davy lay quite still for a moment.

"You . . . you don't mind my asking, do you?" inquired Hippy timidly. "I'm not curious, really I'm not, it's only . . ."

"Look here, Sunbeam," broke out Davy, blushing a brick-red, "I'm a beastly idiot when it comes to talking about myself. Don't know how, and that's the truth. I did come from Canada here, and I'm fifteen years old, and I never did anything to make me ashamed to know myself. I haven't any people of my own who care a bob about me."

"I do—I care more for you than a hundred bobs. She hadn't the slightest idea what he meant, the only Bob she knew anything about being a boy who went to the little

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red school-house. "And the Scowling Scoots will care, when I tell them, and mother will love you, and the captain and everybody in the Valley—they've just got to, I'll make them."

Davy's eyes filled with sudden tears before he turned away his face and said crossly, ashamed that she should see him moved:

"There, don't set me off blubbering. Oh, fids! What's the use? I'm all right. I'm going to get well now, Sunbeam, and make my bally fortune, and then I'll go back with my giddy pockets stuffed full of guineas, and show those beastly brutes I'm not such a ninny as I look."

"Back where?" asked Hippy softly.

But Davy was not to be taken; besides, he had talked himself into high spirits, and the impish, boyish grin that was natural to him sparkled in his black eyes.

"To visit Davy Jones—my great-uncle—Davy, old Dave, he of the locker—won't the old boy be ripping glad to see me though? He'll fold me to his bosom! He's

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a sort of drippy old cove, Sunbeam, and his weedy old whiskers are sea-green and he usually wears 'em in a big bow knot tied at the back of his neck."

"You're teasing," said Hippy, soberly shaking a reproving finger at him, but drinking in every word as if fascinated—"imagine Mal or Plug saying such delightful things," she thought. "I . . . I just don't believe you've got any great-uncle."

"What, would you take me name from me?" asked Davy tragically.

"I just don't believe it is your name, anyway you weren't named for the locker man," and Hippy looked so perplexed that Davy's heart misgave him.

"See here, Sunbeam, you're altogether too trusting; now you jolly well ought to know when I'm fibbing, but since you don't, Miss Innocence, I will tell you what I'll do, when I'm teasing I'll wink my left eye, and when it's sure enough truth, I'll wink my right—couldn't play fairer than that, could I?"

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"Then were you named after Davy Jones, the locker man?"

"I was, I swear it by yonder water-pipe."

"Yes, but you're winking both eyes fast as ever you can."

"My, but you're jolly hard to suit, how is that?" and he solemnly winked his right eye. "And now let's have some more about the cave, and your freebooters, and your captain—say, he must be a downy old bird."

But this was more than Hippy could endure.

"He's not a bird, nor downy, either, Davy Jones!" she blazed. "Captain John Page is the dearest man that ever lived!"

"Who . . . who . . . what did you say his name was?" Davy was on his elbow, his black eyes glowing in his pale face.

"Why, Captain John Page."

"What was his ship?" asked Davy in a slow quiet voice that scared Hippy, it was so unlike him.

"Why, he was captain of the steamship *Lucia*."

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"And his sister you call Aunt Kitty, who's she?"

"Mrs. Katherine Gordon, of Redroof—why?"

But Davy lay back in his hammock without saying a word.

"You aren't angry at me, are you?" begged Hippy, leaning over to look in his face.

"Angry—what, at you?" he said, at last, "not much—that bally fever had a worse grip on me than I knew. I feel . . . dizzy. Wait a bit."

The face he turned to Hippy a few minutes later was quite the old Davy, though his eyes sparkled curiously.

"Now say, Sunbeam, I'm thinking of writing a bally book," his left eye closed, "and I want a giddy, salty hero. Now I'll tell you what let's do. I'll lie here quietly—I feel sort of dippy—weak, you know—and you spin a yarn and tell me everything you know about the captain and his sister and Redroof. Maybe it will make good stuff for the book. Don't leave anything

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out, will you? Just spin away and I'll lie here with my eyes shut and drink it all in. You're ripping, Sunbeam, that's what you are, and I'll be remembering you in my will for this. Warble away."

And so Davy Jones, lying there in the hospital loggia, heard the story of Captain Page and his grandson Mead, of whom no news had come since the night he ran away.

CHAPTER XXII

HOME AGAIN

“‘Said the elephant to the owl,
“Oh, what’ll you have to drink?”’”

shouted Plug, as he dashed down the road. His soul called for song and he was doing the best he could. The cows were in the pasture, the morning chores were done, and he could see the Scowling Scoots already gathering on the Helter’s steps, for Vivian was to portion out the work.

“Hurry up! get a move on, Plug!” called Mal, just as if at that minute Plug wasn’t throwing up as much dust as a flock of sheep. He was wildly happy—it was so good a thing to be a boy—and though his heart pounded like a hammer against his ribs, he felt as if he had springs in his legs and could keep on forever; wild with the very joy of youth he bellowed:

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“‘Since you are so kind, sir,’”

the gate banged behind him,

“‘I’ll take a—bottle—of—ink—’”

and with a last panting whoop he dropped limply on the steps at his mother’s feet.

“Hu-u-u!” he wheezed, fanning himself with his hat, “I’ll bet you couldn’t have piked it that fast, Mal, and have sung all the way.”

“Sung,” protested Vi, “Plug, were you *singing*?”

“Singing,” mused Mal, “that was *singing*. Don’t get chesty, my son; who beat you a mile yesterday?” and he emphasized his question with a poke of his sharp elbow.

Once Mrs. Bassbinder would have exclaimed at Plug’s red face and laboured breathing, and most of all at the dust that covered him; but she had been learning much about boys from Mrs. Helter and the captain, so she only wiped his hot face with her handkerchief and laughed.

“Now,” said Vivian, “we’ve got to get

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down to work. The captain and Hippy will be here on the three o'clock train, so that gives us only seven hours to get ready and we'll have to stop for luncheon and to dress. Let's see"—with her best grown-up air she was consulting an elaborate program she had gotten up the night before. "Sandy has gone for fresh moss for Treasure Cave. He says he knows where there is heaps of that lovely red cupped kind, and he's going to get a lot of that paley green, and all the lichens and woodsy things he can find. Oh yes, and he told me he had found two perfectly lovely new log settees, with red lichens on them and grey moss—that fringy sort. Then Aunt Kitty gave me a whole basket full of seashells and corals to add to the grotto!"

"Good Aunt Kitty," squealed Rog, giving Mrs. Gordon a bear-like hug as he sat perched on the arm of her chair.

"Minnie, and Winnie, and Aunt Chat are going to attend to the cooking and baking, and all that, and mamma and Aunt Kitty and Mrs. Bassbinder are each to see to

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the decorating of her own respective home," Vi read this slowly and with great unction.

"Wow!" breathed Mal from the corner of his mouth to Plug.

"Do you wish me to continue?" asked Vi with her nose in the air.

"I think it is lovely, Vi," declared Silva, from her place at Vivian's feet, her favourite place since Hippy's absence.

"Go on, honey, I'm just kind of hilarious over Hippy's coming home. Go on," begged Mal.

"Well, then, Plug and Mal——" she had it written Malcolm and Leonard Vincent, but she thought it best to leave that out—"Plug and Mal are to go to the woods and bring autumn leaves, just tons, and sumach, I want heaps of those lovely red spikes and bushels and bushels of goldenrod and asters—Silva and I will gather some of those, too. We must have bushels, mind, and I want yards of bittersweet for the front fence. You see, I want to make a broad path of flowers and autumn leaves from the gate to the house and then on out to Treas-

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ure Cave for Hippy to . . to walk on . .” In spite of herself Vi’s voice broke at the mention of Hippy’s little feet walking upon a flowery path. “. . . then I want to make Treasure Cave just a beautiful mass of flowers and leaves.”

“What am *I* going to do?” begged Rog, feeling left out.

“Oh, we couldn’t get along without you, Roggie,” his mother hastened to assure him, patting his pudgy little hand.

“Well, I guess not,” cried Vi, “why, Rog, you are to be chief helper for us girls. We have to fix all the leaves and flowers when the boys get back, and we must arrange the grotto, and wind the fence with the bitter-sweet . . .”

Now all this time Vivian was skirting about an all important subject—and two pairs of bright eyes were understandingly watching her. She, and she alone, knew how many flags the captain had sent from New York for the *Furious Rover*, for the ship was to be dressed within an inch of her life, the captain had promised that. Vivian

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knew, too, what Aunt Chat had prepared for the bumboat—for there was to be feasting aboard,—and just what pretty things Aunt Kitty had made for the wee cabin. They hadn't objected to her keeping it all a secret, but what was she up to anyway? The pink in her cheeks did deepen a trifle under their fixed gaze, for well she knew their thoughts were on the *Furious Rover*, and not on autumn leaves, nor seashells.

“Here,” she went on with great enthusiasm, carefully avoiding their suspicious eyes, “here,” and she drew toward her a basket heaped with little packages done up in tissue paper and tied with ribbons, “are all the presents to put under Hippy’s treasure stone. Silva and I will fix that, too, as, of course, we must be so awfully particular about it. Just think, everybody, even Hulda and Martin, brought me something—why, Winnie gave me this cute little bundle tied with a pink ribbon, this morning. Won’t Hippy be surprised? Well, I guess that’s all. While you boys are gone Silva and I can attend to several other things.”

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"Not for a little bit, Miss Vi," cried indignant Plug. "She can't bamboozle us, can she, Mal?"

"Yah-a-a!" bleated Mal, with a thumb in each ear and fingers wagging. "You thought you would do us, didn't you, dearest sister?"

"Malcolm!" reproved his mother.

"Leonard Vincent!" exclaimed Mrs. Bassbinder.

But Vivian, being true blue under her bit of trickiness, came flying to the rescue.

"That was mean of me, boys," she handsomely acknowledged, "and I won't be mean when Hippy's coming. We'll fix up all the rest and leave the *Furious Rover* to the very last and do it all together. Come on."

"Well, I suppose we are expected to now adjourn and to 'decorate each her own respective home,'" laughed Mrs. Gordon, as the last Scowling Scoot disappeared around the corner of the house. "How Vivian is coming on! She is certainly the most beautiful girl of her age I ever saw."

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“Well, handsome is that handsome does, and I do think Vi’s trying with all her might to behave more of her age,” admitted Mrs. Bassbinder reluctantly, for Vivian was not a favourite of hers. “She’s tamed down considerable lately; it always seemed to me that storm did a lot for her, and then Hippy’s going and all, are really making a nice girl out of Vi.”

“Thank you,” said the little mother; “I’m proud of Vivian.” She as yet knew nothing of the captain’s well-meant interference. “She’s trying with all her heart, and it is harder for her to give up her tomboy ways than anyone, but her mother, knows.”

Mrs. Helter’s heart was very light these days, and very, very thankful. As she worked about the house that autumn morning filling the bowls and jars with golden-rod and asters, wreathing pictures and curtains with vines and bright-coloured leaves—there were fringed gentians for the vase under the portrait—she sang so happily Minnie opened the kitchen door that she might hear.

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Hippy cured, and to be as strong as the others, for so Doctor Jimmie had assured her—how her mother heart rejoiced in that. Vivian growing—by fits and starts, to be sure—but still growing into the sweet, refined little woman her father would have wished her. Mal and Rog, her two manly, sturdy little sons, so loving and lovable. Such good, true friends about her, and then too, and this last meant much of ease of mind to her, a way clearing before her for her children's education.

The buried treasure, under Doctor Jimmie's skilful management, had proved a treasure trove, indeed. He had taken it directly to a wealthy man of his acquaintance, whose pet hobby was coins and told him the whole story.

"I won him with Hippy," wrote Doctor Jimmie gleefully to the captain. "He couldn't withstand that gallant little soul of hers, even by hearsay. 'I'll tell you what I'll do, Cuyler,' he said to me. 'Of course, I've got to add one of these E. B.'s to my collection, and thanks for the chance. As to

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its worth—now you know, as well as I do, it will take the gilt-edge off their fancy price if you put both these Brashers on the market at once—so let me hold this one and you take the other to Christie's in London and I'll give you for mine just what the other fetches there under the hammer.' 'Good,' says I. 'Done,' said he. But then, old boy, if he didn't top it by offering to take the whole of Mrs. Helter's money and invest it for her. Tell her if I had searched the land I couldn't have found a man I would have been so glad to see handle that little windfall. Sixteen thousand dollars—and it will be all of that—isn't so bad for a buried treasure in these prosaic days, and under Duncan's nursing it will mean soon a place on Easy street for our little lady. *Now* who's founded Hippy's fortune?—just answer that."

Hard work accomplished wonders in Tillatoba Valley that day, and by two o'clock everything was ready for Hippy's homecoming. From the deep blue of the October sky, the autumn-tinted wood upon the

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hill to the variegated meadow, all was a blaze of colour—such scarlet and gold, such crimson, and orange, and purple, and russet, and green. The lawns and the houses were gay with banners and garlands, and the path of glory was spread with leaves that were brightest, flowers that were gayest, that had all been brought by loving hands to make Hippy's pathway beautiful.

The *Furious Rover*, with every sail set, and having broken out all her flags from stem to stern, lay calmly among her apple-tree waves. There they fluttered in the breeze, the flags of all nations, from Chili to China. Everybody was ready at last and everyone was in white because the Scowling Scoots had so decreed it. Only Mr. Bassbinder, old Martin, and Sandy, who was in full sailor rig, were let off. The Scoots compromised with Mrs. Bassbinder on a green neck ribbon, but it was only, Vi said, to let her match her shutters.

Mother, the cat, had a new collar with a bell, the Admiral squawked defiance and tried to reach the bright bow that topped his

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brass cage—they were both over at Redroof—but, as usual, sitting in the middle of the turnpike, one ear up and the other ear down, with eyes expectantly gazing straight ahead and a big bow on the back of his neck, sat Pester.

“Fifteen minutes of three . . . five minutes . . . THREE! Now the train’s in,” Plug announced from time to time, as he sat with Winnie’s alarm clock on his knee—the alarm was set at 3:20, that being the first moment, Martin declared, that he could be expected back. “Ten minutes after three . . . fifteen!” Every Scowling Scoot was on tiptoe now.

“3:17,” called Plug, climbing up on the fence and holding the clock aloft, “18 . . . 19 . . . 20!”

“Whir-r-r!” sputtered the clock.

“Oh-o-o!” shrieked Rog and “oh!” cried everybody, for Prince and Dapple came trotting up the dip with Martin driving, and there stood the captain waving his hat, and yes . . . there was Hippy, standing, too, and no little crutch . . . and no little crutch!

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"Whoa," thundered Martin, to make himself heard.

"*Whir-r-r-r!*" the clock rattled on, from its nest of plantain leaves where Plug had dropped it, for now everybody was in the road.

"Mamma first, please, my mamma first!" cried Hippy. Into her mother's loving arms the captain lifted her. "Now everybody!" and Hippy held out both arms as if she would embrace the world.

It was Rog who brought them to, for there he whirled like a dancing dervish. "Walk it! Walk it! Walk it!" he sang at the top of his voice.

"Walk what?" cried Hippy, bewildered.

"The Path!" sang Rog, "the path!" and then she saw it, all mottled and dappled with colour, reaching across the lawn like a carpet at a royal fête.

"Oh, how lovely!" she began, "oh! . . ." for she understood. So many times she had swung herself up that path, and now she was to walk upon it "like any other little girl," and they had made the beautiful way

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to express what they had found it so hard to say. "Oh, I'll walk it! We'll all walk it!"

"You first," begged Vivian.

"Yes, I'll go first with mamma and my captain—for if it hadn't been for my captain perhaps I never should have walked at all. Oh, if Doctor Jimmie were only here! I am awfully glad I've got on my new tan boots. Now everybody must come. Mr. Bassbinder and Sandy, mind, and everybody—everybody who loves me must be in my procession."

"And I," said Pester as plain as words, "will precede you," for with one ear up and the other ear down, and one eye on Hippy, he took up his position in the very middle of the path of glory.

"Why, Pester Helter!" cried Vi, scandalised.

"Oh, yes, Vi," laughed Hippy. "Pester must go first to clear the way."

CHAPTER XXIII

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AFTER all not everything could be done in that last bit of an afternoon, though no one had been able to convince the Scowling Scoots of this fact.

There had been, of course, a visit to the *Furious Rover*, and while Sandy held the ladder firmly below, Hippy slowly mounted, and when she reached the side and the captain lifted her over, you should have heard the shouts that rent the air—as for Silva Luna, she was so full of inexpressible rapture that she faded away into the background and silently did some queer little hopping antics in the outskirts of the group.

Hippy almost cried for joy when she saw her “gig,” filled with goldenrod and maple

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leaves, and a bright red ribbon tied from arm to arm.

“Just as they do to Benjamin Franklin’s and Napoleon’s chair, you know,” exclaimed Vivian. “It’s quite too grand to be used, Hippy, now that you don’t need it any more.”

And yet—when they had lunched aboard and taken a dry sail, during which Sandy surpassed himself in a story he had been thinking up for a week or more—and never once did the captain have to say “draw it mild”—why, Hippy said she guessed she’d go down in the gig. It was really because she did not like to have the gig slighted, but the captain thought she looked a little pale and insisted she must be carried to Treasure Cave—since she was weak yet, and no risks should be taken.

So she rode on Sandy’s shoulder, and a proud moment it was for that old sailor when Hippy chose him and put her arm around his neck and he cantered away as gently as if he carried a fairy.

After much whispering on the way and

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consulting with the captain it was decided that Hippy was to be diverted from looking under her treasure stone—that was to be left 'til she was rested—but indeed, there was no trouble about that, for she was so delighted with the mossy cave and the new settee she wanted to go to housekeeping right away, and seemed to have forgotten the cupboard. Then it was to the grotto for a drink, and when Hippy had exclaimed and rejoiced over the new seashells, she must stop to tell them of her sail upon the Atlantic, for Doctor Jimmie and the captain had taken her out.

“It's so beautiful—you know, Sandy—when it stretches away and away 'til it seems as if it must have gone to the forever land,—and some day we must all go and see it,—but oh, do you know, nothing seems so beautiful as home, and I'd rather be just here with mamma and you, and our jolly times, than anywhere in the world. Now, please don't anybody think me silly, but let's all go and take a little row in the *Dash-away*. I used to dream about it.”

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Wasn't Silva glad then she had gone the last minute to fill the bow of the *Dashaway* with goldenrod and asters, and how pleased Hippy was that the little make-believe craft had not been neglected! Then, if you will believe it, in they tumbled, all those who could, and the rest sat on the grass behind as if they were on seats, and Mal and Plug rowed sturdily with the broomstick oars. There Minnie found them when she came to the garden gate to call them in—all the Scoots, and the captain and Sandy, listening to Hippy's story of Davy Jones, the nephew of the locker man.

“And don't you think,” she was just saying, “that when I told the captain he said we would have brought him home with us to stay until he was well, but Doctor Ziller had taken him away just the day before—wasn't that too bad? But I gave my boy our address, and he is going to write, and just as soon as he makes his ‘bally fortune’—that's what he always said, but I never thought to ask him if it was cannon balls or base balls, but anyway it's ‘bally’—and

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the minute it's made he said he was going to come right to Tillatoba Valley."

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The next morning everybody was excitedly waiting Hippy's setting off for Treasure Cave, and yet not a soul but Pester offered to go with her.

She never once caught sight of the signs and countersigns that flashed behind her back among her fellow Scoots. She had no suspicion that, as she closed the meadow gate, the whole band was already hiding behind the old smoke-house to be after her the first moment it was safe.

Hippy was really very glad to go alone—without Silva even—she could now set her own pace, for it tired her more than she wanted them to know when they hurried along in their usual pell-mell, helter-skelter way.

Now she could take her own time and look about her and see how lovely it all was. How she had missed it! How long the time had seemed! There was the figurehead of the *Furious Rover* above the apple-trees, she

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knew he was glaring at her; there was old Hippopotamus rock, cool and grey; there was the *Dashaway*, and there Treasure Rock a glowing mass of colour, for the Scowling Scoots had covered it the day before with boughs of maple, and beech, and swamp oak. Hippy stopped to get a drink at the grotto, and to admire again the shells in their green setting and those that glimmered up at her through the clear water. Oh, there was the key, why, she must take a look under her treasure stone. She had several new treasures she must bring down—the lucky stone her boy had given her the last day they were in the loggia together; the little brass box with the dove on top, that Mrs. Carter had put in her hand at parting, and the peach-stone basket the young man in number 22 had carved for her. The cave was like a moss-lined nest, Sandy had done his work so well. It seemed a pity to step on that emerald carpet, but it was a pleasure to kneel on it, fitting the rusty old key in the rusty old padlock once more.

“Easy all, you duffers!” warned Mal

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from behind his hand. Hippy had opened the door now, and the Scoots had wreathed themselves silently over the edge of the cave or about the entrance, and were peeping. Mal threatened them with mute fierceness, shaking his fist when they leaned too far. But they were quite safe, Hippy was too intent now upon her task to look behind her. There were the six flat stones just as she had left them, hers was the third, there was no sign that it had been disturbed. Carefully she lifted it.

“My goodness mercy me!” she cried.

Mal’s fist shot out at those giggling Scoots; he “gritted” his teeth in a terrible way, looking as much like the figurehead as he could manage—but still they tittered and gurgled, and gasped, until their foolish faces were purple.

But Hippy was now busy lifting out package after package, for with painstaking care, and under the most uncomfortable circumstances, Vivian and Silva, with the aid of the old iron spoon, had carefully scooped the earth from under Hippy’s stone, shap-

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ing and moulding it with their hands until the space was as deep as a cooky crock, and it was filled to the brim. It was beautiful to see Hippy's joy as she unwrapped her presents, to see her read the name on each and untie the ribbons and gloat over them, one by one. No wonder those enraptured Scoots had to fill their mouths with leaves, to rock, and thump, and pinch themselves to keep from laughing right out. Their chief glowered and glared, but he himself, at last, was forced to take a roll off the other side of the rock to subdue his spirits.

Now the last gift was fished out, unwrapped and admired, and there lay the little gold cross, Aunt Kitty's gift, by Hulda's red flannel tomato pincushion—then Hippy sat silent, and thought, and thought, and thought.

"What is the matter with her?" whispered Rog to Vivian. "Doesn't she like them?"

"Sh-sh-sh-sh! . . . Mercy!" gasped Vi. "What's she doing?" for Hippy was upon her knees once more.

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Deliberately Hippy took off the first stone and looked in, then the second, and so on to the end—under the very eyes of the horrified Scoots.

“*Hip-py Hel-ter!*” shrieked Vi, forgetting they were spying. “Oh, Hippy Helter, what have you done? You are a sneak, a villy-viley sneak!”

“And you never can wash it off!” groaned Silva Luna, turning her bonnet wrong side to, and sobbing with all her might into its gingham depths.

“Whatever made you do it, Hippy?” demanded Mal.

If Hippy was surprised at their sudden onslaught it was as nothing to the pained astonishment with which she heard their audacious charge.

“*You* to ask me that!” she gasped.

“Well, and why under the sun did you?” urged Plug.

“Why? why?” asked Hippy indignantly, “do you suppose I’m going to let every one of you dear things—mamma, and Aunt Kitty, and everybody—be a villy-viley, and

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not me? Do you suppose I'm going to see you all ashamed with being good and dear to me, just because you love me so, and then stay all clean and nice myself. Well, I just wouldn't. Of course, I'm a villy-viley, but I'm proud of it, because now I'm just like the rest of the family."

"She thinks we all looked!" gasped Plug.

"Why, your names are all under my stone. Of course you looked."

"Oh, Hippy," cried Vi, sinking down beside her and folding her in her arms, "we didn't! Silva and I were the only ones allowed in the cave while we fixed it and our eyes were tied tight shut. It was awfully hard to work that way, and I did know the feather when I touched it; but I didn't see it. Then I smoothed the ground all down and I laid the stone on top, and I shut the door and locked it before I ever took the handkerchief off my eyes, for fear I might be tempted. Oh, you poor, poor thing, to be a villy-viley sneak! What shall we do?"

Already Hippy was in tears, all the heroic glow of a moment before was quenched in

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the awful sense of shame that rushed over her. It was so real to them all that not one saw the folly of her grief.

"Maybe if I'd . . . I'd give all my presents to the poor I'd get over it; I'd hate to awfully, for I never had so many beautiful things . . . but I would," she sobbed.

"There aren't any poor in Tillatoba Valley, and besides one never gives away presents," said Mal, plunging into deep thought.

"She . . . she might burn up her peacock feather, and her Sunday School tickets and her . . . crutch as a sacrifice to the figure-head of the *Furious Rover*. Kindle them just below, you know, and let the smoke mount," ventured Plug.

"I will *not* sacrifice to idols!" declared Hippy tearfully, "and, besides, I won't be so mean as to burn my crutch when it was so good to me. I've tied a blue bow on it and put it in the trunk with Jessica. I'd as soon be a villy-viley as that mean."

"The worst of it is, I suppose, we really oughtn't to associate with her—oh, say, she might bow down before me three times sincè

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I'm the chief," suggested Mal, who was extremely bumptious over his chiefdom.

"Oh, I know! I know!" exclaimed Vi, jumping up wildly, "don't you cry another tear, Hippy. Take off your bonnet, Silva, it's all right. I've thought of a perfectly scrumptious plan. We'll make a whole day out of it, a regular ceremony. It will be perfectly jolly, and everybody must be solemn as tombstones, so it'll be impressive, you know. We'll have an altar on each rock, and we'll all dress up and Hippy shall stand by Pitter-Patter Brook with a wreath on her head and her hands folded on her breast like that girl in the Ganges picture. I'll ask mamma for an old sheet to make her a robe, and Rog can run over to the *Furious Rover* and get the gilt chains. Oh, you'll look perfectly lovely, Hippy, and—and oh, we'll think of lots of other things as we go along."

Never had the meadow beheld a more wonderful play than that. The little victim in her white robe, chained, in the centre of that motley crew, was enough to wring tears from

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the rocks. But by supper time everyone being tired and hungry, Hippy was declared by the high priestess—Vi, of course—who was clothed in a red calico curtain with a feather duster head-dress—to be as:

“Pure as a lily, cleansed from all iniquity, now and forever. Amen. Fit to be once more welcomed to the bosom of her loving and beloved fellow Scoots.”

“I’m as tired as if I had run a mile,” sighed Vi that night, when she and Hippy were at last in bed. “Dreadful weary, my dear, but oh, it’s good to have you home. I did miss you so.”

“I missed you, too, Vi dear,” and Hippy snuggled close. “It’s just dear to be home again, and oh, wasn’t it fun to-day?”

“Yes, but oh, Hippy, you’re going to be a little girl a long time yet, and . . . and all the time we were playing out there in the meadow my heart kept saying: ‘It will soon be over, it will soon be all over.’”

“Why, Vi Helter, you’re only fifteen; that isn’t so very old. Lots of girls play long after that. Why, Nurse Ruth said she

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played with dolls 'til she was sixteen, made their clothes and everything."

"But, you see, maybe she wasn't beautiful," sighed Vi. "That's what makes such a difference."

"Are . . are you, Vi?" asked Hippy innocently.

"Oh, awfully, can't you see it? And oh, Hippy, I hate it so. You know first of all I wanted to be a boy—most of all the world I wanted it—but now I wouldn't complain and I try to be satisfied being a girl, if I could only be common pretty like you and Silva. You didn't see anyone so pretty as I while you were away, did you Hippy?"

"No-o-o," admitted Hippy, "at least not anyone looked so pretty to me."

"There it is, you see, I'm just *it*, and I can't help myself, and just you listen to what the captain says," and for the first time Vivian told of what happened in Red-roof library that morning after the bullfight.

"It's—it's the responsibility that scares me so," confessed Vi; "it would be fun

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enough if you could just be pretty and let it go at that, and I want to be good, Hippy, I really do, but it's this awful being-an-example business that gets on my nerve so dreadfully, and I haven't been real happy inside, not scrumptious happy, you know, one minute since the captain told me. Where are you going, Hippy?"

"We are going to mamma this blessed minute. Come on, Vi, you ought to have gone to her long ago. That's the way I waited about my knee, but on my twelfth birthday I really asked her, and oh, I shall never forget, she was just perfectly lovely. Maybe she will say you don't need to be an example at all, Vi. The captain never was a lady. Let's go and ask mamma how to grow up."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE STRAGGLER

IF you please, Miss Edith, ma says will you excuse Plug. He will be here soon, but he had to go for the doctor." Silva Luna, stiffly starched, stood in the school-room door, shy, as usual, but evidently feeling the importance of her message.

"Is somebody ill?" burst out Vivian, forgetting in her interest that she was in school, and after all it was hard to remember sometimes in that delightful environment.

"It is the straggler," replied Silva, then instantly clapped her hand over her mouth and looked more important still. "Oh, Miss Edith, I forgot, Winnie said I had better not talk about it."

"Very well, dear, then you should not," and Miss Edith tapped the bell, leaving the Helter Skelters simply consumed with curiosity. Their Plug gone for the doctor, and

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they not know; their Silva knowing all about it and not going to tell, just because Winnie said so.

“Straggler . . . man, or woman, or dog?” begged Hippy, in a whisper, much to Vivian’s disgust—“proper self-respect should not allow one to quiz for a secret in that way”—but Hippy’s curiosity without shame mouthed her question so desperately a deaf mute would have understood it; but Silva only shook her sleek head with a provoking fore-finger laid upon her lip.

The beautiful school at Redroof had come about in the most delightful way imaginable. Just all in a moment, after Hippy’s return, the captain decided upon a subject which had been troubling Mrs. Helter and Mrs. Gordon for a long time. The children must have better training than they were getting at the little red schoolhouse. Of course, the first step was to consult Doctor Jimmie, whose interest in the Scowling Scoots—for equally, of course, Plug and Silva were included in all these plans—was only second to the captain’s. Doctor Jimmie’s reply

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was Nurse Edith, who had for some time been feeling she must have a year's rest from hospital work, and who was delighted to accept Doctor Cuyler's suggestion that she go down to Tillatoba Valley, and be governess to "the queerest, nicest, little folks in America." With Hippy as a sample she quite believed him, and from the first moment she stood before the Scoots—Hippy's recommendation of Nurse Edith having also been high—there was no doubt as to the success of the new school.

The next step after securing a teacher had been the fitting up of a schoolroom in the great gabled attic at Redroof, and here with pictures, and blackboards, and maps, and globes, and every window filled with blooming plants, the children were almost as happy as out of doors.

The captain, still grieving because there was "no news," had requested that the classes in geography be turned over to him, to keep him from brooding, he said. And such delightful lessons as these lucky boys and girls had!

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"It's just next thing to going," Mal said with a long breath after a most exciting hour in the Arctic regions.

But Sandy had moped a bit after school began, until the captain suggested that after school hours the Scoots, under his direction, should dam Pitter-Patter Brook in the west pasture to make a pond; for already it was nearing Thanksgiving, and a frosty nip in the morning air told that skating days were on their way. To nobody was this such joyful news as to Hippy, for Doctor Jimmie had written: "if she would be very, very careful, and the captain always keep her under his own eye . . ." Then he ended by sending her a pair of shining skates, and announced he was coming down himself the first cold snap to teach her to use them: "for what could an old sea captain know about skating anyway?"—wasn't that just like Doctor Jimmie?

It was nearly ten o'clock and the geography class was in full swing, when Plug, rosy-cheeked and bright-eyed, came tiptoeing into the schoolroom.

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"How now, my son, late?" remarked the captain, pausing with his pointer poised above the map, for Vivian and Mal were just off for China.

"Silva brought my excuse, sir," Plug was also most important. "I galloped Deacon all the way," he managed to whisper as he passed Mal.

In spite of the captain's delightful talk the Scoots received but a blurred impression of the Flowery Kingdom.

"Straggler" . . . "yes, sir, Pekin" . . . "Straggler—and Plug going for the doctor" . . . "The Yang-tsze-keang, sir" . . . "the mean things, not telling" . . . "the Min Mountains of Tibet" . . . "it was Winnie, she just wants to show off" . . . "Confucianism, yes sir" . . . "if Hippy wouldn't be such a little silly," so ran Vivian's thoughts, the result of which was three little cocked-hat notes for the rest of the Helter Skelters, saying: "Don't you *dare* ask one single word!!! Vi."

That morning, for the first time, the "nicest children in America" harum-scar-

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umed down the stairs and out of the front door at the very first tap of Miss Edith's bell.

"Dear me, what little whirlwinds!" said Mrs. Gordon from the library.

"Oh, Aunt Kitty, I'm ever so sorry. We forgot, please excuse us," and Vi paused a moment in her headlong flight. "You see there is somebody ill over at the Bassbinders, and we are not to know, and that makes it so dreadfully exciting. We'll never do it again." And, forgiven, she sped away down the drive in the wake of the rest.

It really was more mysterious when they got home, for the living-room was deserted, and though they called, "Mamma! Mamma!" up the stairs, there was no answer.

"Your mamma is over at Mrs. Bassbinder's," explained Minnie, "and she said you were to eat your dinner and play quiet, for there is somebody sick over there."

"Oh, Minnie, who . . ?" begged Hippy.

"Is . . . is it contagious?" asked Vi adroitly—frowning at Hippy—for just at

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that moment Bassbinder's Winnie appeared in the dining-room door.

"Mrs. Helter said you was to give me the witch hazel, Min," she began, and then she hastily caught up Vivian's question. "Contagious—catching you mean? Now it's strange I never once thought of that! I just hefted that poor thing up in my arms and got him into the house as quick as I could."

Vi winked a wary eye at Mal and kicked him gently under the table. Mal looked perplexed for an instant, but quickly returned the kick, with interest, and waited to follow her lead.

"Did it . . . I mean he . . . seem injured in any way?" asked Vi, elegantly sipping her tea.

"The boy? Oh, of course, I couldn't tell that," said Winnie, warming to her subject as she saw how indifferent Vi and Mal seemed, for it was only Hippy—whom even Vivian despaired of ever teaching canniness,—and Rog, who sat there all ears and eyes. "I just saw him lying there, poor dear,"

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went on Winnie. "I'd been to town to see mother—Minnie was too lazy to go—and I was coming along in the moonlight, and there, right at our gate, with his poor head a-laying on his satchel, was that boy, and he looked so awful I really thought he was dead."

"How old a boy is he?" asked Mal listlessly, glancing at Vi for approval.

"How could anybody tell with such a long-legged creature—he looked white and sick enough to be a hundred. Mrs. Bassbinder," this to Minnie, "just broke down and cried, when I came lugging him in. We got him up in the spare chamber—you wouldn't be surprised at that if you'd see him, Min, he isn't no back bedroom boy, I can tell you that. We rubbed him and warmed him and after a while he opened his great big eyes and looked at us and then, bless me, if he didn't smile."

"Smile?" cried Hippy, "oh, what colour were his eyes, Winnie? has he . . ."

"A strawberry mark on his left arm," chipped in Vi, with a cool laugh, but frown-

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ing terribly at Hippy behind her napkin, "of course, it's only some poor tramp boy, Winnie, and it's too bad . . ."

"Indeed, he's not, Vi Helter! If you'd have seen that gritty smile, it was almost a grin, you'd have known he was just a poor weary sufferer and no tramp. Besides, tramps don't go around with satchels, and it's not such a very bad-looking bag either—it's locked, and Mrs. Bassbinder won't have him bothered yet with asking his name, though I can't for the life of me see the harm. Not that I think all this would interest you any," she added crossly, for Vivian was yawning delicately behind her hand.

"Oh, Winnie . . ." began Hippy earnestly. But Mal squelched her with a pirate eye.

"Well, we got a cup of hot milk down into him, and he went right to sleep and slept like a top all night," went on Winnie, "but Mrs. Bassbinder got it into her head that he looked worse this morning—it was just the daylight on that poor lank face of his—and nothing would do but that

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Plug must go rushing off for the doctor. The doctor was just driving away as I ran over . . .”

“And what did he say?” interrupted Minnie.

“Oh, only what I’d said from the first,” said Winnie importantly. “That the poor lad had been sick, that he was half-starved, and that he had walked his two legs off. All he wants now is feeding—and I’ll see to that—and nursing a little—and Mrs. Bassbinder will ’tend to that. Mrs. Bassbinder says she thinks he’s some kind of a foreigner, for though you can understand him all right his tongue’s got an awful queer twist to it.”

“Winnie! Winnie!” Silva Luna was calling.

“Goodness me! If there ain’t Mr. Bassbinder home for dinner!” exclaimed Winnie, “and me standing here gabbling.”

“*Clickety-rickety-upscuttle-do!*” chanted Vi, dancing about with her arms outstretched. “Didn’t I do it beautifully?”

“You! . . . I like that! I guess I helped,” grumbled Mal.

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"What are you children talking about?" asked bewildered Minnie. "Do sit down, Vi, at your place this minute, your mamma would never like such doings."

"Oh, Minnie, you old darling dear," cried Vi, seizing her about the waist. "Don't you see Plug and Silva wouldn't tell us a word about the boy, making a great big mystery out of nothing, and it was all Winnie's doings, she just wanted to tell it all herself? But you know, as well as we do, that if we had let her know we were just dying to hear she wouldn't have told us a word. What made you choose Winnie for a twinnie, Minnie mine?"

"And you wouldn't let me say one word," complained Hippy, "I wanted to ask if he wasn't . . ."

"Davy Jones . . . Davy Jones," sang both Mal and Vi together.

"Ho! tons o' suds ship o'er her rail,
Her nose 's in Davy's locker."

"I guess we knew what you were after, Hippy, we're just sick of Davy," ended

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Vivian saucily, "you've talked us blue in the face about him. You'll never see *him* again."

"Don't you mind, Hippy," said Minnie quickly, seeing an ominous sparkle in Hippy's eyes. "Vi's just got one of her high times, she'll be as prim as a daisy by night."

School was over for the day at two o'clock and all the Scoots, except Hippy, had gone with Sandy to work at the dam. Hippy had stayed home to practise, for she was taking her first music lessons and was greatly delighted, but for all that she was glad when her mother called that the half hour was up and she must go out to play. Her mother, too, had smiled at the idea of the new boy being Hippy's beloved Davy, especially since the boy refused to divulge his name even to the doctor.

Out of doors seemed strangely still and lonely without the rest, and all the things Hippy had planned to do had lost their interest.

"If I could only see for myself," she thought, as she swung on the front gate,

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“I’d be satisfied. I could go just as easy and I wouldn’t disturb him one bit. Big eyes, Minnie said, and that smile sounds exactly like my Davy, and he said he’d come—I’m just going over to ask Mrs. Bassbinder.”

Mrs. Bassbinder, who was just coming down the stairs, opened the door to Hippy herself and at once gave consent to her seeing the boy—who ever refused Hippy anything?

“But you must go very quietly, dear; he is asleep now and I wouldn’t have him waked for anything,” she said in an undertone. “He has eaten a good dinner and I think he can be up to-morrow, but he’ll need nursing for a long time, the doctor says. He’s a nice boy, for all he won’t tell his name, nor where he came from. His clothes are beautiful, even if they are old and worn, and he’s clean, that clean I didn’t mind one bit putting him in my spare bed. Go quietly, Hippy.”

So Hippy slipped softly up the stairs, along the hall, and into the spare room—the door stood open—and there in the big

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white bed by the window was . . . Davy Jones!

"Oh, Mrs. Bassbinder, it is—it is!" cried Hippy under her breath, as she came flying down the stairs. "I didn't make a bit of noise . . . but it's my dear Davy. Why, Miss Edith will know him right away, and oh, goody, here comes my captain!" for just at that moment Captain Page had opened the gate and was coming up the walk.

"Good-afternoon, Mrs. Bassbinder," he began, "my sister tells me . . ." but he got no further, for Hippy was dragging him in by the arm, all a-twitter with excitement.

"Oh, captain, Mrs. Bassbinder let me peep, and it's my own Davy Jones, and oh, please, come up and see. Mayn't he, please, Mrs. Bassbinder? We'll just creep up as easy. Oh, it's my own Davy Jones!"

"Yes, indeed, captain, do go up," urged Mrs. Bassbinder, now almost as excited as Hippy. "The poor boy must have walked all the way from New York to find Hippy."

One behind the other they all three softly

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crept up the stairs and at last stood in the spare room.

"It's Davy . . . my Davy," whispered Hippy, the tears running down her cheeks.

The captain did not seem to hear, but bent with a searching gaze as if to prove what he believed he saw. He stepped softly to the bed and stood looking with tender approval at that thin white face upon the pillow. Then, as if he felt that intent regard, the boy slowly opened his eyes, and they silently asked of each other's gaze the loving relationship that both of them longed for.

"Mead, my dear child . . . surely this is Mead," said the captain softly.

"Hello, grandfather," said Davy Jones, stretching out a thin hand, his face fairly illumined by his lovable grin. "I knew you would come, sir, and I wasn't going to give the giddy thing away until you got here. I . . ." and he flushed boyishly, "I tried to make my bally fortune before I came to you, sir, but with this beastly illness, and all, I haven't a bob, or I'd never have come to you this way. I hadn't any idea of fainting at

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your gate, sir, and getting up a beastly scene. I meant to be as cocky as you please, then I got so horrid ill, and the strength seemed to run out of my knees and down I went in a heap. I'm awfully sorry, sir."

"Why, Mead, we have done everything that could be done to find you," said the captain, holding that thin hand as if he would never let it go.

"I know, grandfather, Sunbeam told me, and after that I . . . I seemed to get homesick for you," confessed Mead. "She said you were so jolly good, you and Aunt Kitty, and I got so low in my spirits I just lit out from the place Doctor Ziller got me. He was so kind to me that I just couldn't explain, or he'd be wanting to give me money, I jolly well knew that. I missed Sunbeam so much, too— isn't she bully? and I wanted to see if I couldn't be a Scowling Scoot.

"Oh, Davy . . . you are . . . you *shall* be a Scoot," and Hippy was down on her knees pressing his hand to her cheek. "Why didn't you tell me? Oh, captain, is my Davy your Mead?"

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"He is, indeed, my darling," said the captain, "and I might never have found him, Hippy, but for you. Wait until his Aunt Kitty sees him. Why, boy, you look enough like your father . . ."

"To be his own son," ended Mead, grinning broader than ever, for in spite of hard times, and illness, and weariness, the mischief of Davy Jones was cropping out now that Mead had seen his grandfather—well, there isn't a boy in the world who wouldn't have felt pretty safe and happy lying there, if such a grandfather as Captain John Page was looking down at him with pride and love and understanding. "My father was Lieutenant Edgar Page, of the United States Navy, and my mother was Evelyn Frye, daughter of Sir Austin Frye, that tickets me all right, doesn't it, captain?" and Mead saluted gaily.

"You're all right, even as to the grin, old chap," said the captain, "and just such a mischief as your father was. But why didn't you come straight to me?"

"It does seem silly now, sir," and the

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boy flushed hotly. "Stop your crying, Sunbeam. I thought you'd be jolly glad to see me, and here you're shedding beastly tears all over Mrs. Bassbinder's white counterpane; stop it, I say," and Mead patted Hippy's bent head lovingly as she kneeled there beside him. "Well, the truth is, grandfather, I'd been playing off at school and the Head wrote a letter to my cousin, Sir Charles, just after my grandfather's death. It wasn't anything beastly, you know, just out of bounds and cheek, and I jolly well knew my cousin's giddy ways at the same school, so I didn't stand it well, but he was up, you know, and I was down, and he jawed me in a way no one would stand—my American blood, and all that, and I just cut for Montreal. I knew a chap at school from Montreal who said money lay around loose there. It didn't—not for me—so I made for New York, beastly ill and desperate, and I fell in with Sunbeam; that's all, sir."

"But you said your name was Davy Jones," reproached Hippy.

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"Well, I didn't like Mead Page to be a charity patient in a hospital, and, besides, the fellows had always called me Davy Jones at school, because I was wild about the sea and all that. It's in the blood, sir," and Mead grinned up at the captain. "So you see, Sunbeam, I *was* named after the locker man."

"But you asked me about my captain."

"I am ashamed of that for I did pump you horrid. My, but I wanted to come then, grandfather, but I did want to show you I could take care of myself, and now . . ."

"Mrs. Bassbinder, may I come up?" called a voice in the hall.

"It's Mrs. Gordon," exclaimed Mrs. Bassbinder.

"It's Aunt Kitty," cried Hippy.

"Not a word! See what she does! Tell her to come up, please," and the captain, with Hippy, stepped into the next room.

"I just felt I must do something," said Mrs. Gordon, going up at Mrs. Bassbinder's bidding. "Mrs. Helter says he's such a dear boy and with Mead always in my mind

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. . .” she stood in the door, so dainty and sweet, and looked straight into those dancing black eyes.

“Well—well!” she gasped. Her memory swam dizzily among the home faces of the past. “How like Edgar!” then straight to the bed she flew. “Why it must be—it is Mead!” Gathering Mead up in her arms she laughed and cried at the same time.

“Oh, you blessed rogue! Oh, Mead Page, I knew you’d come, Mead, I believed it all the time.”

“Right O, Auntie dear! I’d have been here long ago if I had known what I know now,” and Mead returned her embrace with ardour, his hungry, boyish heart happier than it had ever been in all his motherless life. “Golly, it’s good to find grandfather such a downy old bird! He’s just great, grandfather is, and *you*, oh, Aunt Kitty, it’s most too good to be true! I hope it isn’t a bally dream, for I’d hate to wake up now, I’ll tell you. Come out, grandfather, please, she knew me.”

“Oh, Jack!”

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"Well, Kitty!" and that was all, but they knew, those two, what it meant to see their boy lying there safe and sound, they knew how hard those long weeks had been.

"Oh, there come the Scowling Scoots up the road," cried Hippy, glancing out of the window. "They're all back with Sandy. Don't you want to see them, Davy, and Sandy and Pester?"

"My hat, yes! Call them all up, Sunbeam. Mrs. Bassbinder, won't you let 'em?" and Mead turned to her a pleading face. "Mrs. Bassbinder has been no end good to me, Aunt Kitty. She and Mrs. Helter and Winnie. I shall never forget it. To think I'm here . . . why, when Sunbeam used to reel off yarns about Tillatoba Valley it seemed like a sort of giddy fairyland out of a book . . ."

"Vi . . . Vi, Silva—Sandy—Pester—everybody," Hippy was calling wildly from the front door. "Come over, quick."

"What is the matter? Is the house a-fire?" shouted Plug.

"It *was*—my—Davy Jones! It was so,

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and you said, Vi Helter, I'd never see him again!" declared Hippy, her face aglow; "and . . . and he's the captain's Mead and he's going to live at Redroof forever and ever, and be a Scowling Scoot, and he wants to see you everyone, and Sandy and Pester too . . . right off, this blessed minute!"

And in they trooped, Vivian, Mal, Plug, Silva, Rog, Sandy, and after them tagged Pester.

"We're coming, Davy Jones," cried Hippy. "The Scowling Scoots are coming."

THE END



